

PINK ROSES

BY
GILBERT CANNAN

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GILBERT CANNAN

Author of

"The Stucco House," "Mendel,"
"Old Mole," "Round the Corner,"
etc., etc.

TORONTO

J. M. DENT & SON LTD.

1919

PR6005

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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PINK ROSES

I

THE CAFÉ CLARIBEL

IN the first place Trevor Mathew went there to avoid his lodgings, which had become detestable to him since Harry Hardman and James Peto, his two Cambridge friends, had been swept into the war. He had been so proud of them, his rooms in Town, and they three had had such jolly times there that when Hardman went off to the Dardanelles and Peto to Flanders, he had promised to keep them until they returned. It was just his luck to have the medical officer discover a systolic murmur in his heart. He had always been out of everything. Perhaps his heart had always played him tricks. Well: Harry was buried at Suvla Bay and Peto was smashed so that he could only lie stiff, with one eye glaring at the ceiling, one eye that never slept, though its eyelid closed over it occasionally as a matter of decency, and Trevor kept the big living-room in the dingy street in Paddington because he could not bear to move his friends' belongings. Neither could he invite others to take their places, for he felt that they might after all come back when the war had proved to be only an evil dream. Sometimes he felt so sure that Hardman would come back that he could not bear it, and rushed out to avoid hearing his knock. Hardman wasn't the man to be killed: no one could kill him, so full was he of life and purpose. . . . Trevor had seen Peto with his one eye staring, but even that he felt

might easily prove to be only a nightmare. It could not be true that these things had happened to his friends while he went on as before, putting in his three years as an articled clerk in a London solicitor's office before he went home to join his father's firm in the North. The Law had become fantastic, irrelevant and derelict. Personal affairs were of no moment. The clients who fussed about their affairs filled him with disgust. They should have been suspended because Hardman lay buried and Peto was shut up in a darkened room in a place that looked like a house, but was really a hospital or the museum of a hospital. Trevor was not certain what anything was. Outwardly he was going on with his career as though nothing had happened because his heart murmured, but he had stopped as surely as his friends. Nothing went on except the war, and that went on and on. Nothing that happened in it had any significance. The war went on. He ate, drank, slept; visited, went to the Law Courts, to consultations in Chambers, to Somerset House, Bankruptcy Buildings, and read the newspapers. He read half-a-dozen newspapers in a day, the same news, the same imbecile paragraphs over and over again, but nothing had any meaning. Men died for liberty, but liberty disappeared because life as it had been planned and dreamed had died. He had no personal life left, no one had any personal life, nobody wanted it. . . . People continued their occupations mechanically because they must, but there was no sense in them. The war went on, and there was no sense in that either. It had become a matter of words, names and figures so enormous as to be entirely unintelligible. Trevor felt that it was no good his trying to find any meaning in it, because he had been left out of it, left behind, and, as his father said, his duty was to prepare for his final examination, and for the sake of the firm—Mathew, Gilchrist & Mathew—to pass with as much distinction as possible. It was one thing to accept this duty, another to carry it out—with a murmuring heart. It had become altogether too serious

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when the rest of life had been swept away, and London had changed from a pleasant metropolis to the nerve-centre of the war, an arsenal, a recruiting-dump, an international head-quarters, suddenly Belgian, Serbian, Russian, Roumanian, Italian, anything and everything, like a house-party with a host so modest that he had withdrawn. And the popular figures of London public life were diminished. They were overshadowed by strange people from the four corners of the earth who gave orders to the British public as though they were Hindus or Hottentots, and the British public liked it and obeyed. . . . Certainly young Trevor Mathew had lost his bearings, and could only follow the Law as his father and his father's father had done before him, but the Law did not interest him, and it was only to keep himself afloat that he followed it. Yet he longed to drown as his friends had done, but that he was not allowed to do because his heart murmured. It was ridiculous. At Cambridge he had rowed, played tennis, cricket, soccer, and had never thought of his heart except that he had always been bothered to know why he could never play games as well as he ought to do, and why he could never get the last ounce out of himself.

He was beginning to think that he was losing his sense of humour when he discovered the Café Claribel. First of all he discovered Hyde Park on a summer evening. He had begun to loathe his lodgings so much that he walked miles out of his way in the evening on returning from the office in London Wall. It gave him a certain pleasant mortification to walk through the khaki-filled streets in his antediluvian costume of tail coat and silk hat. He was even pleased when old ladies asked him: "Why aren't you in the Army?" and he answered by beginning to unbutton his waistcoat and pointing to the region of his heart. Also it was easier to think his strange thoughts in the street than in that dreadful room that was still full of Peto's theories and Hardman's laughter. He had thoughts like: "I am already older than my father because the friends of his youth lived through it with him."

Thoughts like that are hardly bearable, and young Trevor when they came liked to be able to dart into a crowd of people, and he found that the band in the Park tempered the pain of them a little. It was not a very good band, and the music it played was poor and excessively ornate, but it sorted well with the impossibly flourishing flowers that had so obviously not grown where they were, and the shrubs brought in full bloom from Kew, and the glimpse of the Serpentine, which never looks like real water but like real water in a stage scene when paint would be more effective. . . . Every now and then the tittering of a group of girls would make him feel how out of date he was, how out of place even. He noticed, too, that the manners of such parades had altered. The girls flaunted and strutted. The men in khaki were wooed, accosted, carried off in triumph.

The scene pleased his eye. Human figures moving under the shadow of green trees in the evening light had the gracefulness of a dream. They were of no time. Whatever might be outside the enchantment of the light could not intrude. This was no longer London in the twentieth century, but a dream-place bewitched into the stillness of a picture. Even the music was more a memory than a satisfaction to the senses. . . . He was so profoundly eased by this sudden experience that he could not tear himself away, although he knew that he was in fact hungry. Fact, however, had nothing at all to do with the experience.

He sat down in a hard green garden-chair, but without consciousness of movement. It was as though the chair had placed itself under him and had lured him into a seated posture. For a few seconds he had an absurd pleasure in thinking that he was dressed correctly for the Park, and no one else was that. The world was no longer correct. Its habits had been broken, but he remained. That was extremely uncomfortable, except that in perfectly correct attire he could watch the changing scene and the stiff, numbed people moving under a spell.

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It was like looking through a Corot or a Watteau into the conception that made its charm. It was like—it was like . . . He was very drowsy. His eyes could take in no more. It was like—like—pink roses . . .

His eyes could see nothing but pink roses now. The figures of the promenade moved behind a screen of pink roses. This puzzled him, and he made an effort to solve the mystery.

Fifteen yards away from him a girl was sitting. She was dressed in a black and white gown, and she had a charming little hat in which were three pink roses. In her bosom she had a nosegay of fresh roses. A little frill of lace fell from the front of her hat and from under this her eyes were fixed upon him. He met them with a rather frightened stare. Her left eyelid drooped and she gave an inviting jerk of the head.

Never in his life had Trevor spoken to an unknown lady. The girl with the pink roses swung her foot, and his eyes turned from her face to that, and quite uncontrollably his breath began to tickle his throat. He coughed, laughed, coughed again. With a sidelong smile at him the girl rose and walked slowly away, and again without any consciousness of movement Trevor rose and followed her, taking his pace from her. Their chairs had been fifteen yards apart. He kept exactly fifteen yards behind her as she walked along under the trees. As she reached the arch at Hyde Park Corner, she stopped. He stopped too, fifteen yards behind her, and stood gazing up at the anti-aircraft station, saying to himself:

"That is where the searchlight is."

When she moved on, he moved also, although he had not seen her. He was aware of pink roses, nothing but pink roses, and so, fifteen yards apart, they proceeded along Piccadilly, across Piccadilly Circus, and into the Café Claribel.

The glare of the lights reflected from the mirrored walls hurt his eyes. The air was stale and smelt of food. For a moment or two he lost sight of the pink roses, but

found them again with a pang of pleasure, and sat at a table fifteen yards away from them.

It was the first time in his life that he had done anything unaccountable.

The Café also had its enchantment. It was quite unlike the restaurants he used to frequent in the old days when the first week of the month used to be devoted to an elegance which the three combined allowances could not maintain. There was no flunkeyism about it, and it lacked the wonderful invisible machinery which provided the delicious sense of being borne by boundless wealth above life. Here the machinery of the establishment was only too visible. The swing doors led into the kitchens, from which continually came the clatter of utensils and the not unpleasing odour of skilful cooking. Next to the swing doors was a bar caged in with glass. The waiters were—waiters. Trevor was used to distinguished ministrants who were unlike the guests only in the way they carried their arms. Here they wore short alpaca jackets and wide aprons folded tightly round their hips, and they hurried so that they broke the air of efficiency which all good restaurants possess. Frock-coated maîtres d'hôtel wandered despairingly striving to make good the deficiency, but in vain. But for their flat Italian heads they would have looked like Sunday-school superintendents gloomily keeping up the appearance of enjoying a summer feast in the country.

The long hall was crowded. Every table was filled, and there were men and women waiting for places to be vacated. Trevor had a table to himself. The waiter laid a menu before him and went away without waiting for his order. A negro in a loud check suit came up and asked if he might sit at his table. Trevor said:

"Certainly not."

The negro grinned shyly and went away. The orchestra in a little gallery above the bar began to play "La Bohème," and Trevor, recovering some of his sense of reality, looked towards his lady of the pink roses. She was eating a steak and she had a small bottle of red wine on her table. She

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was older than he had thought, but he was not disappointed. She was very good-looking, very neat, and she had charming movements with her shoulders, a delightful alertness in her glance as she took in and was amused by her surroundings. Every now and then she glanced towards him, but he always looked away. He did not want to know more of her than that first impression of pink roses. That did not fade. She still carried with her something of the enchantment of the scene in the Park.

He ate, and the food was good. He ordered a small bottle of Sauterne, and it was capital. Food and drink reconciled him to his surroundings and to the descent from the Hardman-Peto standard of dining out. After coffee and liqueur he began to feel that he, Trevor Mathew, was being adventurous, that he was asserting himself, stepping out of the routine ordained for young gentlemen with rich fathers who pass through the metropolis on their way to the practice of an honourable profession. Hardman had passed out of it into the grave, Peto into that darkened room, and now he, too, had taken a plunge into the unknown and the un-English. The table next to him was occupied by a Belgian family party. On his left was an Italian whom he guessed to be attached to the Embassy, with a lady whose clothes were so conspicuously worn that she was obviously attached to the dress-making trade—a mannequin? Two officers in brilliant uniforms sat behind him talking in some strange tongue. Roumanian? Serbian? Slovak? It was a delightful game this guessing at the histories of unknown persons. . . . The lady with the pink roses smiled at him. He realized to his horror that he had only just enough money to pay his bill, and not enough to give the fussy, incompetent waiter a proper tip.

How friendly her smile was! How charming to be in sympathy with another human being fifteen yards away! He did not wish to be any nearer, nor did he desire the adventure to proceed any further. On the other hand, he would not have it come to an end. As it

was it had in it an exquisite quality of happiness, of fulfilment, of poignancy—just a hint. He did not require more.

All his life he had lived on hints and had held aloof fastidiously, doing what was expected of him, but never consciously seeking beneath the surface, or asking from any person or any experience more than what was immediately offered. He was charming, and was intensely susceptible to charm. His life with his friends had held more than enough of that for him, and when they were taken from him he had been dazed and almost paralysed, and had let himself be absorbed in routine for the duration of the war. A future without his friends seemed intolerable, and he had only been able to face it with set teeth.

He stared rather stupidly at the lady with the pink roses, and shook his head with a dreamy smile of which he was entirely unconscious. He wanted to tell her that all he wanted was the impression of pink roses, but she was delighted with his smile. Her face was suddenly suffused with happiness, and she gave a shrug and pulled herself together as though to hug some new treasure to herself.

Still smiling dreamily he paid the bill, took his hat and stick and walked quickly out into Piccadilly Circus, where the wheeling shafts of light flung across the dark blue sky gave him a sense of the mechanized city in which day by day the motive power was intensified and dehumanized so that the people every day became more ant-like and less significant. . . . It was with a cold shock of almost terror that he realized that his thoughts had begun to take shape, that the long-stored impressions of his period of mourning for his murdered youth were becoming articulate in him, and that he was not at all the Trevor Mathew he had expected to be, but something very much bigger, something rather wickedly detached and impersonal.

He walked home watching the shafts of light across the sky, the crowded motor-buses, the few darting cars driven by men and women in uniform, the ambulances gliding quietly, brilliantly lit, and only the ambulances dared

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be up to the pre-war standard of displayed efficiency. They, like so much in pre-war days, proclaimed that they were the best that money could buy. But Trevor realized with a start that he had forgotten what London was like before the war. A confused memory he had of talk and noise, and glitter and spending, but never anything so precisely real as the pink roses under the trees. There was never anything so dewy and fresh as that impression. He felt as though he had buried his face in them, in the sweet-smelling roses that could heal his hurt, and he knew for the first time how acutely he had suffered in these years in which the best of his generation had been obliterated—for Hardman and his like were the best, a new type, bringing a new note of honesty into the affairs of men, utterly at variance with the preceding generation yet warmly tolerant of it, watching it eagerly to see that the great traditions did not slip from its careless hands. People like Hardman knew what was going to happen, and they ached to stop it, but they were too young to be heeded, and so when it came they went out to stop it. . . . As he let himself into his room Trevor distinctly heard Hardman's voice saying :

"Either this has got to stop or I must."

Well, they had stoppèd Hardman, but the war went on.

Trevor filled his pipe and lay back in his chair and said aloud :

"I never thought I should be happy again."

It seemed to him that he was wronging his friends to be made happy by such a little thing as the scent and sweetness of a nosegay of fresh roses fifteen yards away. To make amends he tried to read a newspaper, but that habit also was broken. It only made him laugh. The unhappy men who wrote it were trying to advertise the war, to boost it as they boosted patent food or plays. They were trying to boom a thing that was eating the heart out of everybody's life. . . . Trevor laughed. Oh! he was going to see things very clearly, but it was going to be damned uncomfortable. With that idea in his mind

he found that he was indeed making amends to his two friends. He was no longer haunted by them. They were no longer ghosts. Indeed he was more familiar with them than when they were with him. All reservations were swept away and they were united in purpose. They were all three turning away from the world as their fathers had made it and were for building it anew in accordance with their own desire, and what he had always thought was now proved true—there was more in Hardman's laughter than in Peto's theories.

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II

LAW

TREVOR had never been very popular in the office. He had never redeemed the mistakes he had made at first when his shyness had made him not a little of a nuisance. The clerks liked him, but the partners had not been able to break through his reserve and had given up all attempt to make his acquaintance. So he had accepted the office—Hobday, Treves & Treves—as a place to which he must go more or less regularly for three years. . . . His uneasiness had been aggravated by his position by the military authorities. Mr. Hobday would have no man of military age and fitness in his office, and one or two of the clerks compared with whom Trevor looked an athlete had been forced to go. They had been accepted, and they obviously regarded murmuring hearts as the privilege of the rich. . . . Again, after the death of Hardman Trevor had refused to talk about the war, and he was suspected of being intellectual. Also, as he had an ample allowance the rise in prices did not affect him at all, and he remained untouched, always perfectly dressed, and careful to eat in the atmosphere to which he was accustomed, and as no one ever broke through his reserve no one ever borrowed money from him. It was not that he did not notice shabbiness. He did, especially in boots, but he put it down to slovenliness. He was an only son. He had always had plenty of money and would one day be very rich, because besides his father's wealth there was that of his uncle and three aunts to come to him. He had never really believed that honest men were poor, and he had always accepted that the poverty-stricken deserved their plight.

His unpopularity in the office had made him listless, and for many months before the adventure of the pink roses he had played hardly a more animate part than the Law Reports in the bookshelves. His article period became merely a question of time. He was sulking. As the life he had planned had been destroyed he would make no effort to reconstruct any other. His money and his inherited position would carry him through, and he would dress well, eat well, and cultivate his taste in cigars and wine. So far as he could see a partner in an old firm of solicitors need know precious little Law. All that was necessary was a good managing-clerk. He himself would give his clients the benefit of his taste in food.

After the adventure of the pink roses he began to realize dimly that he was bored. There was no one to talk to, for everyone was preoccupied with thoughts which they dared not utter. The young men had all gone, and the young women were beginning to seek distraction in hospital and in charitable endeavours.

For a time he would not admit that any crisis had come upon him. Then he pretended that the scene in the Park had given him the distraction he needed and he frequented the promenade, and listened irritably to the band, but that was not what he wanted, and on several occasions he walked down Piccadilly, but jibbed at the last moment and would not enter the Café Claribel. It was, he told himself, second-rate: not the kind of place to which he would ever have gone with his friends, and it was an agony to him to think that he might in the smallest detail play them false. He was the last remnant of their world, and, as such, he took himself very seriously. He corresponded regularly with their relatives, and Hardman had left a little volume of poems which he had undertaken to see through the press. . . . These were duties which he had to fulfil. After all, when a generation is gutted the survivors owe something to those who are gone. . . . So seriously did Trevor Mathew take this debt that he conceived himself to owe that he was often inflicted with a kind of nausea,

for the longer the war went on, the higher the debt was piled and the less was he capable of serenely facing his liabilities, and he began to hate both the very old and the very young, while the sight of a woman often made him feel queasy. People who felt violently about the war, either for or against, filled him with disgust. It was too big a thing to admit of any kind of self-indulgence in mind or emotion.

There was no doubt about it that his queasiness was relieved and he began to lose his envy of those of his friends who had been able to roll up their minds and put them away for the period which they would have to spend in uniform or in the service of the Government, and he told himself that it was because of the charm he had discovered in the Park. He went that way home every night, and almost every night, reluctant to go to his rooms, he wandered down Piccadilly and almost went into the Café Claribel, only saving himself by buying a paper or a box of matches, or swerving aside into the tobacconist's or the hairdresser's next door, for it had always been one of his rules in life when in doubt to have his hair shampooed.

One night he got as far as the outer hall of the Café, where there were Belgians and ladies of the town sitting at little marble-topped tables. He stood and stared at them and backed out. He did not like Belgians, or that was the excuse he found for himself as he turned and almost ran into Piccadilly Circus. He was ashamed to buy either a newspaper or a box of matches, and was just on the point of nerving himself to defy the fascination that lured him on when he found his way blocked by an old man holding two little dogs.

"Buy a little dawg, sir?" said the old man, as I before Trevor knew what he was doing he had bought a fox-terrier pup for fifteen shillings. The pup was not more than three months old. It had a black patch over one eye and another on its tail. Otherwise it was white, and fortunately it was a male.

The purchase left Trevor with only half-a-crown in his

pocket. He did not want the dog, but also he did not want to go into the Café Claribel. He stood for some moments cursing himself for an idiot. The lady of the pink roses came out of the Café and stood near him. She looked at the dog and then up into Trevor's eyes and said :

" Oh ! what a darling ! "

Taken unawares, he hastened to explain nervously.

" I've just bought him. I don't really want him. Would you like him ? "

" I love dogs," said the lady, " but they're not allowed in the flats where I live."

He wanted to break off the conversation there, but her smile was so friendly and her tone was so intimate that he could not resist her, and he knew in his heart that it was she whom he had been so desperately avoiding. He had even bought the pup as a means of escape from her.

" I'm sorry," he said.

" You'd better keep him," she replied. " You look so lonely. A dog's company."

" Have you dined ? " he asked.

" No. I felt too lonely. I thought I'd have supper later on."

He grinned and said : " I . . . I've spent all my money on the dog, and I've left my cheque-book at home."

She thought for a moment.

" I could give you something to eat at my place. It's just out of Leicester Square. Not much, only sardines and salad, but I've got a bottle of crème de menthe."

Trevor could not resist the friendliness of her invitation, and he walked away with her while she talked to the pup, whom she christened Rover.

She lived in a block of flats in Gerrard Street, four very tiny rooms lamentably over-furnished, and without taste of any kind, good or bad. Every article in them was designed to look expensive, and was of sufficiently good quality to give neither offence nor pleasure.

" I haven't lived here very long," said the lady of the pink roses. " I'm that changeable."

She told her maid, a coloured woman, to prepare supper, and she bade Trevor make himself comfortable, gave him a cigarette and an orange bitters, and went into her bedroom to tidy herself. The maid brought in a saucer of milk for the pup, who hurled himself at it and swallowed it in three gulps and then, much distended, lay on the white angora hearth-rug and went to sleep. Trevor also wanted to sleep. He felt that he must do that or run away, for he was more than a little frightened at being in such a place with only half-a-crown in his pocket.

The lady returned shortly. She had changed into the costume she had worn in the Park and in her bosom she had pinned a bouquet of artificial pink roses. That hurt Trevor as the impression of pink roses, dewy and full of scent, had been the overwhelming idea in his mind for so many days, and the perfume which the lady used was no proper substitute.

"That's nice," she said. "It is nice to see you sitting there making yourself comfortable. It's only a tiny place, but it makes it homely to see you sitting there." She beamed at him and watched his every movement as though nothing else in the world existed for her.

"Are you hungry?" she asked.

"I am rather."

She was delighted at that and ordered the maid to hurry.

Supper was soon ready, a most elegant little meal laid in a room only half the size of the drawing-room. . . . The table was close to the window, through which in a house opposite could be seen lurid posters of cinema films, and Trevor, smiling to himself, thought that he had walked into one of them, he and the pup and the lady of the pink roses. She was so delighted to have him there that he wanted to please her and to do so he asked her her name. Nothing could have charmed her more.

"Dorothy Clay," she said. "That's my real name. But I call myself Cora Dinmont. . . . What's yours?"

He told her. He liked her too much to lie to her.

"What a nice name!" she said with her eyes shining, and she crooned it over to herself.

"Trevor Mathew. Do you live in London?"

"Yes. I live alone now."

She introduced him to a drink that was new to him, crème de menthe and soda. Its taste was as delicious as its colour, while its novelty was altogether appropriate.

"Tell me more," she said.

More and more oppressed by its dullness he told her about the office and the Law Courts and the coach with whom he committed to memory the few principles discoverable in English Law. He described the four partners and the remaining clerks, and was rather astonished at the amount of detail he was able to put into their portraiture.

"You're a college boy, aren't you?" she said. "I like college boys and soldiers—before the war. There's no knowing with soldiers now-a-days." She bit her lip and stopped. This boy was different, and she did not want to be with him what she was. . . . If only she had never taken money and had never made the discovery how easy it was to make money even in the little country town where she had been a girl.

There was a certain innocence in Trevor which she wanted to live up to.

"I like him and he likes me," she thought. "Why should it make any difference? He's lonely too."

The maid brought some admirable coffee, and Cora produced a bottle of fine old brandy. Trevor stretched out his legs and became more loquacious. He began to brag a little:

"I wanted to stay up at Cambridge," he said. "I could easily have got a Fellowship. I did History my first two years and got a First. I wanted to go on with it, but my governor insisted on my taking Law. I got a First in that too, but there isn't much Law in practising. I mean it isn't often you get a legal point . . ."

He knew he was being a bore, but ordinarily it was the hardest thing in all the world for him to talk about him-

self, and having begun he could not stop. Cora drank in his words as though he were propounding a new gospel. Her lips were parted, her eyes shone, her bosom rose and fell. She kept his glass filled with brandy, but hardly touched a drop herself.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this," he said.

"Oh! do go on," she said. "My father was in the Law, a solicitor's clerk. They had a lot to do with public-houses."

"Do you often dine at the Café Claribel?" he asked.

"I go there a good deal." Again she bit her lip. "It's not a bad place. I like the band and the mirrors, and there are some nice people go there and it's out of the usual run."

"You must dine with me there one night."

"Ooh! I'd love to," and she thought, "He *does* like me." But Trevor was only being polite. He had allowed her to entertain him, and could not leave her hospitality unreturned.

"I've often wanted to go there again," he added. "But I didn't like to go in alone. I'd never been there before that night."

She was so overjoyed at his speaking of it, that she could not sit still, and got up and walked about the room although there was hardly room for her to take five steps in any direction.

"I don't know what made me go to the Park that night, but I had to go. We had a little park at home, and there was a band on Sunday afternoons. . . . I remember I had a blue crêpe de chine dress and white stockings, and there was a boy I was very fond of. He was dark like you. I think he went to college afterwards. Perhaps that's what made me so fond of college boys. I often used to ask after him—Sydney Collier. You didn't know him, I suppose?"

"No. No."

"Perhaps it was Oxford College. I think he became a clergyman. I never spoke to him. I suppose every one has fancies like that."

"I suppose so," replied Trevor. "I never had them myself. At least, not after I was fifteen. . . . I stopped in the Park that night because I heard the band, and then I liked the people moving about under the trees."

"Yes. I saw you. I saw you a long time before you saw me. I walked past you two or three times. I thought at first you might be Sydney Collier, although, of course, he's a clergyman."

Both enjoyed the aimlessness of their conversation, and neither wanted it to stop.

"I'm glad I bought the pup," said Trevor with a smile. "I should never have spoken to you if it hadn't been for him. I can't do it, you know. I can't talk to people unless I'm used to them."

"You're talking to me all right," she answered, returning to the table, and sitting with her elbows on it, her chin in her jewelled hands.

"Ah! but I'm used to the idea of you. I've been thinking a good deal about you."

She smiled happily and half closed her eyes. He liked that. He was quite sure now that she was very beautiful and wanted to tell her so, but his scruples would not let him. No more than she did he wish to allow her position to interfere with the pleasure of this chance evening. Also he was afraid that she would laugh at him. Many people must have praised her beauty.

"I've thought about you, too," she said dreamily and a little voluptuously, so that his innocence was offended.

"I've often looked out for you. You're so quiet after all the other noisy brutes. London's got that noisy since the war. I've had a lot of friends killed—have you?"

"Yes."

And suddenly in Trevor there came tumbling in a series of swift, painful realizations that this evening was somehow very important, and that it was what he had been waiting for through the weary months of almost catalepsy. It was his chance to assert himself, to break his arranged life that was left untouched when all other arranged lives

had been broken. He was reminded of a cream cake he had stolen when he was a little boy. The thought of tasting it was so delicious that he never ate it but took it to bed with him night after night until at last he lay on it and squashed it into an uneatable mess. The memory of it made him laugh out loud, and Cora, taking it for a sign of happiness in him, laughed too.

"I must go now," he said; "good-night, Dorothy."

He had decided to call her and to think of her as Dorothy Clay.

"Good-night," he repeated.

"Oh! Are you going?"

"I must go. . . . Will you dine with me at the Claribel on Friday at 7.30?"

"I'd love to, and I'll get a table. It's always full after seven."

"Oh! I mustn't forget the pup. I don't think I'll call him Rover. I shall call him Sydney."

"Oh!"

"Do you mind?"

"No. I'd like your dog to be called Sydney."

She fetched the pup and returned kissing its sleepy, blank face, calling it Sydney, Sydney, Sydney.

"He'll be company for you."

"I shan't feel lonely any more," replied Trevor. "I'm awfully grateful to the pup. I hope I haven't talked too much. Can I come again?"

"Whenever you like. I'll always be in for you."

She stood for a moment by the door hoping that he would kiss her, but he shook hands with a courtly bow. She followed him down the stairs to the hall door, but again he only shook hands, and after she had closed the door she stood with her back of her hand to her lips and gazed up into the darkness, and she said aloud:

"Thank God I've saved a bit of money. Oh! thank God I've saved a bit of money."

Trevor walked home with the pup nestling against his breast. The sky was filled with low-hanging clouds and

the streets were very dark with the shaded lamps. London seemed beautiful and romantic to him now that its garish night-life had disappeared. Anything could happen in such an atmosphere. When the lights went up and a new world would be disclosed, a new race and already a new Trevor Mathew had come into being, one who was critical and eager and not at all inclined to accept his inheritance unquestioned. Several times in his light-heartedness he kissed the pup. . . . He had wanted to kiss Dorothy Clay when he left her, but he could never kiss her until she had wiped the red paint off her lips.

Meanwhile Cora Dinmont was sitting at her dressing-table staring at her reflection in her mirror. She had removed the paint from her face and the black from her eyes. She gazed at her arms and her bosom. She was proud of them, but she was a little afraid of her face without its covering. Was it beautiful? Could it possibly be beautiful? . . . Just a touch of rouge, just a hint of blue round her eyes. . . . No. That was wrong. She removed it and nodded and smiled at herself.

"Hello! Dorothy Clay!" she said. "Hello! Dorothy Clay. Sydney Collier's come, and he isn't a clergyman!"

So she sat deliriously and happily shedding the trappings of Cora Dinmont and groping gradually back into the past until it became so vivid that through the open window she could smell the beanfields and the meadow-sweet, and hear the water tumbling over the weir from the canal into the little river, and she could hear the rooks stirring and cawing in the trees. . . . She would get a blue crêpe de chine dress made, and she would wear white stockings with it.

She nodded and smiled at her reflection.

"Good-night, Dorothy Clay," she said.

Then she turned off the light and jumped into her preposterous bed with its pink silk coverlet and decorations of pink ribbon, and lay aching with happiness at being alone.

III

CHÂTEAU MARGAUX

ON Friday afternoon Cora Dinmont, almost unrecognizable without her paint, went to the Café Claribel to order a table for two. First of all, she thought she would have the table in the screened corner by the door, but then she decided that this would expose the young man too much to the gazes of other women, and she decided on the top corner where Trevor could sit with his back to the diners, and she could see what was going on among the regular frequenters of the place. She told the maître d'hôtel, who looked like a gargoyle from a Doré illustration of Rabelais, that she wanted an extra special dinner.

"As usual?" said the maître d'hôtel, and Cora frowned.

"Mr. Ysnaga has ordered a table already," said the maître d'hôtel.

"I am not dining with Mr. Ysnaga," snapped Cora, and she wished she could arrange to meet Trevor somewhere else, but she did not know his address.

She had tea at the Claribel and afterwards, the evening being fine, she walked along to the Park and sat where Trevor had sat on the evening of their first encounter. There was no band, but she stayed until she was chilled, imagining herself back in the country meeting a young man like Trevor, going through all the stages of courting with him, being taken home and introduced to his family, and—here she was so moved that tears rolled down her cheeks—married, living in a little house. . . . Why not? Everybody said she was a good sort. She understood men and food and marketing. She had never lost her head

like some girls, and she had kept wonderfully fresh and young. . . . She knew several girls, French girls too, who had got married.

She had bought herself a blue crêpe de chine frock, and she wore white suède shoes and silk stockings. Her hat was a neat little blue straw with pink roses. As she returned she bought some pink roses from one of the old women by the fountain. Four-and-sixpence! How prices had gone up since the war!

She stood by the fountain and looked over towards the Claribel. There was no sign of Trevor yet, only the usual throng of officers, street-walkers—of whom she thought with contempt—actors and actresses, touts and street-vendors. She rather hated that corner now and she wished a bomb would fall on it one night and kill some of the lounging people who made it so noisy and vulgar. Meeting her there Trevor might think her one of them. . . . She saw people whom she knew going into the Claribel, and she began almost to wish that he would not come. The old man with the dogs was there, and she felt so grateful to him that she ran over and slipped five shillings into his hand.

"Make it ten, lady," he said, "and you can 'ave the little dawg."

She shook her head and backed away from him in confusion, and then Trevor arrived. He had stopped late at the office, and had been to his club to cash a cheque. The old man recognized him,

"Little dawg doing well, sir?" he asked.

"First rate, thanks," said Trevor, taking Cora's outstretched hand and bowing over it in his courtly way.

"I've got a table," she said as they passed in through the swing doors which the commissaire held open for them. She annoyed him by making a silly joke about dogs not being admitted, but his annoyance was soon lost in the nervous tension of their entry into the grand café-saloon of the Claribel. His senses were made excessively acute by the novelty of the experience.

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Facilis descensus averni.

The Doré maître d'hôtel swept towards them with a swing of the tails of his frock-coat and with outstretched hand and dancing, mincing step he conducted them up to the table which Cora had selected. The café-saloon seemed endless to Trevor, all his English prejudices bristling against so much foreign atmosphere.

"I thought you'd like this corner," said Cora. "It's a long way from the band and we needn't see anybody."

"I like it," replied Trevor as he blinked and contrasted the scene with the quiet, dusty traditionalism of the office. "It is quite like being abroad."

"Oh! Have you travelled much?"

"Only to Paris."

"That's all I've been to." She beamed at him. This was another common bond, that they had both only been to Paris.

He ordered dinner with some ceremony, just as he used to do at the Savoy or the Carlton in the old days with Hardman and Peto.

"I think claret, don't you? There's nothing to beat good claret."

"The Château Margaux is their best claret," said Cora, and then she was annoyed with herself for exhibiting so much knowledge. Dorothy Clay could know nothing about wine.

"Very well, then. A bottle of Château Margaux, sole Mornay, entrecôte, pommes nouvelles, crème caramel. How's that?"

The Doré maître d'hôtel wrote down the order and Trevor said:

"We must drink Sydney's health. I think he'll grow into a dog in time. I'm going to take him down to the office sometimes to teach him the Law. . . . I think I shall send him to Rugby and Caius."

Cora stared at him. She was not used to the Cambridge brand of nonsense, for her college boys had been of a very different stamp.

Trevor wanted to go on talking about himself. He had been bottled up for so long and had not had such a good listener as Cora had proved herself to be for years, for he had always played the audience to his friends.

"I've only one more year in London," he said. "I suddenly realized that after our delicious supper the other night. I'd given up thinking about time. There's no reason why it shouldn't be a splendid year, is there? . . . I mean, if I've got to go back and live in the pre-war provinces I ought to have something to remember. After all, it isn't my fault that I've got a heart. If I hadn't I should either be dead or have wonderful memories of a Greek island, or the desert, or ruined villages in France or Belgium; something that isn't English any way. . . . I've been thinking. I don't see why we shouldn't forget everything else for a year."

The waiter brought the Château Margaux, poured the first drops into Trevor's glass and filled Cora's. She raised her glass and smiled at him. When his was full he raised it, held it out towards hers, and touched it, saying:

"Here's to our year."

Cora drained her glass and a faint colour crept into her pale cheeks. Trevor laughed and said:

"Sydney will be a dog by then. . . . It is wonderful what a difference a dog makes. I was beginning to think I should never care for a soul again. It's the war, I think. One stops, somehow."

Cora's blank expression forced him to realize that he was talking over her head, and he muttered apologetically:

"It was the Dardanelles. That was the last straw. The sawdust trickled out of us all after that. . . . I beg your pardon." He filled her glass again. "If I'd any sense I should have taken to food and drink after that. Thinking was no use, was it?"

The waiter brought the sole Mornay, and Trevor, eyeing the nearly empty bottle, said:

"Can we do another half bottle?"

"Can you?" asked Cora.

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He took this as a challenge and ordered another bottle.

"It is good stuff," he said. "There is no harm in good stuff."

But Cora did not hear him. With the dainty, fastidious greediness of a cat she was eating her sole, and Trevor, looking across at her, thought she was very like a cat; wise and mysterious and completely competent. He thought but did not say:

"Are you really not interested in the war? Did it never move you? Didn't you even feel a kind of seasickness when they withdrew from the Dardanelles and the feeling in the country turned from a Quixotic exaltation to blind hatred of the Hun?"

Her healthy absorption in her food was a sufficient answer to his questions and he envied her. There was no pretence or consciousness about her enjoyment, and she was so thoroughly happy that she did not need to talk or think. This seemed marvellous to him. She had some secret which had been denied him, and to account for it, he told himself that she was "of the people."

"Do you ever read anything?" he asked at last, in a kind of desperation.

"Ooh! The Sunday papers. I stay in bed on Sundays."

"I mean books."

"I like a pretty story now and then."

The entrecôte had arrived and with it the second bottle of Château Margaux. When he was half way through that he began to smile at himself. After all it was he who was to be pitied. She had lived while he had given his energy to a thing called History, to which the events of the last few years had given the lie. She, having lived, could go on unperturbed while he, having thought, was left exposed and groping. History had been given the lie, and the Law was a dusty anachronism that had grown out of old tyrannies and privileges to preserve their letter long after their spirit had disappeared.

There was nothing anachronistic about Cora. All her traditions were intact. They at least had remained and

would remain unquestioned. She had no problems, internal or external. The only question for her was Food and How to get it.

"That," said Trevor, "is the only thing that matters."

"What is?" asked she, surprised at his so suddenly breaking the glowing wine-lit silence.

"Food," he answered. "That is what it is all about, Food and anxiety about the continuance of supplies."

Vaguely divining that he was talking about the war, she said:

"I don't mind air-raids, but I do wish they'd put the lights up."

"If they put the lights up," chuckled Trevor rather drunkenly, "the people would think the war had stopped, and it would stop."

"Wouldn't that be lovely? I'm so sick of soldiers. They're all nerves. I've had some very bad times with soldiers. Some of them are so queer. I remember there was one who clung on to me and wept as if his heart was breaking, and said he would never go back. I had to give him brandy and then he was better. Wasn't it terrible?"

Trevor's heart began to thump and his thoughts roved, and he traced patterns with his fork on the tablecloth.

"I'm a fool," he said. "I'm a damned fool. The other night I went away wanting to call you Dorothy Clay because I didn't like—all that. Compared with a lawyer's yours is an honest calling. What you do is of service to humanity. You allay suffering. We foment it and turn other people's quarrels into money, and our impositions were so enormous that they had to be made statutory."

He enjoyed talking to her in words that she could not possibly understand. It was an unscrupulous attempt to assert his superiority.

"I do love to hear you talk," sighed Cora. "I do really. So few men have anything to say for themselves."

For some reason the band was patriotically disposed, and played the Marseillaise, the Russian and the Japanese anthems, and God Save the King, and with each tune

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in turn little groups of diners stood up in reverence, and then returned to their food, wine, and talk.

"And for those tunes," said Trevor, "millions of men are being killed. They are sung that posterity may have supper."

"D'you like cinemas?" asked Cora.

"Cinemas? . . . I used to enjoy a good play, but I'd rather forgotten about enjoying anything until I met you. . . . Would you like to go to one?"

"I like a good cinema. It's better than reading because you can see for yourself, but I don't like war-pictures. They give me the hump."

"Horror?"

"No. It isn't that. It's all these men in line, and sometimes they show you thousands and thousands of them marching. It seems silly somehow. And I know what some of them are like when they come back. They want too much of a girl."

There was something in her that frightened Trevor and at the same time attracted him deeply, so that the superficial charm she had had for him disappeared. Her eyes were big and dark, but they had no gleam of intelligence whatever, and yet he felt that she knew and understood him, or at least his mood, better than any one he had ever known, and she made him understand himself. . . . He also knew that even if he had wished it, he could not escape from her, because he needed her and she him.

He would not use the word in connection with what had happened, because it was so remote from what he had always thought and vaguely dreamed of as love. It was something better and more real than what he had meant by love, which had been rather a formal thing, nice, discreet, decent. He wanted to be, he must be disturbed out of the nauseated lethargy in which his grief had left him. He must have something active working in his soul to withstand the corrosion of the war, and he felt utterly certain that Cora understood this perfectly—not with her head perhaps, but with her heart, with her body,

her blood, her nerves, all of which offered him a steady good comradeship. There was no room for deceit now. His case had been revealed to him—by her—as too desperate, and he was intensely grateful to her for her unconscious revelation.

He turned and looked down the long café-saloon.

"Do you know any of these people?" he asked.

"A good many of them."

"What do they do?"

"Oh! anything. . . . The girls are always making money and the men do sometimes. I wouldn't like you to know any of them."

"Why not?"

"They're not your sort."

"What is my sort?" he asked with a smile.

"Ooh! Gentlemen and ladies. People who never think about the rent."

The shrewdness of the definition pleased him. That was the only distinction in the world since 1914. Some people had money and others got it as best they could. Manners had been swept away.

Thoughts and memories began to crowd in on him so fast that he could no longer bear to sit still. He gulped down his coffee and liqueur and asked for the bill. As he was waiting for it he leaned forward, and said:

"You know, what has been wrong with me is that I have had to go on thinking. Some of my friends said: 'The war is right.' They have been killed. A few others said: 'The war is wrong.' Some of them are in prison. But it satisfied them like a gospel. I couldn't say it was right or wrong. To me it was outside morality, like cholera. Nothing alters that. You can't hide the truth by making a hell of a noise. That is why I have kept so quiet. I can't go on until I feel certain in myself."

Cora smiled at him kindly. He took her hand and said:

"I shan't be interfered with for a year."

"All right, kid," she said, giving his hand a warm squeeze.

"You're all right."

To her he seemed very young, very unhappy and more than ever like Syd Collier.

With the bill the waiter brought a note for her. She read it and looked angrily down the café-saloon and shook her head. Trevor involuntarily turned, and a few tables away saw a handsome Jew with a long, crooked nose and black eyes of an extraordinary brilliance staring with a confident smile.

"Who is that man?" he asked.

"His name is José Ysnaga," replied Cora. "He wants me to go and play poker. But he doesn't play straight. That nose of his can smell money a mile off. . . . Let's go to a cinema."

Trevor stole another glance at the Jew and then back at Cora, and for a moment his native English caution asserted itself and he suspected her of luring him into the company of thieves. He laughed it off, however, and said:

"He looks as if he did well out of it."

"He does," said Cora. "He's a rich man, but he can't go straight."

It was on the tip of Trevor's tongue to ask the hackneyed question:

"Why isn't he at the war?"

But he swallowed it as absurd. It takes more than a war to divert the Ysnagas of the world from their purposes.

As they walked down the café-saloon he studied the man carefully, and found himself admiring his imperturbable smooth rakishness. He had a very beautiful woman with him, and on his table was an iced bottle of champagne, two or three liqueur bottles, and in his ringed right hand he held a large cigar. He rose as they passed, and it was impossible for Cora to avoid speaking to him though she refused to introduce Trevor. That did not prevent Ysnaga turning to him and with a charmingly apologetic air explaining that he had something of importance to say to Miss Dinmont. Ysnaga's manners were so magnificently

bad as to be pardonable. Nothing else could be expected of him, for he was so completely himself.

Cora was very angry, and all Trevor heard of their conversation was :

"I'm not going to, so there."

Ysnaga bowed with a wide crooked smile, and Cora said :

"Come along, Boy."

Trevor nodded and followed her out into the street.

"He's a bad man," she said, "and he wants to make everybody as bad as himself. He pretends he was born in America to get out of the Army, though he's got Whitechapel written all over his ugly face. But he does know how to make money. He's got two factories out at Bow, and the Government owes him I don't know how many thousands. He was in prison when the war began."

Trevor gulped down this surprising information. It startled him and jolted him even out of his excitement in plunging away from the captivity of routine in which he had lived. He gasped :

"Really ?"

And Cora said :

"Yes. He had a cinema then, but it didn't pay. . . . Do you like Dorothy Gish ?"

"Who is she ?"

"She's on the films. I think she's sweet. Her and Pauline Frederick I like best : I don't care for the men on the films except Charlie Chaplin."

They found their way to a cinema in a by-street. The doorkeeper greeted Cora familiarly, and the manager, a little dwarfish rather deformed man, came up to her in the dark, squeezed her arm, and said :

"Hello, Cora ; you haven't been in lately."

"No. How's business ?"

"Not exactly roaring, but—all right."

Trevor lost his temper and dragged Cora away after the girl waiting to light them to their seats. Cora was pleased with him for that, and gave a contented sigh as

she sank into her seat. As he removed his hat she took it and held it on her lap. She was delighted to have him so easily surrendering to her life, for she knew that such surrender was what he needed.

He even saw the pictures through her eyes as they flickered in front of him, and responded to every foolish joke with a laugh and to every false sentiment with a twinge of emotion, that just stirred, knew that it was not really required and slipped back again. That was very pleasant and left him undisturbed to the investigation of what had happened and was still happening between him and the lady of the pink roses. . . . In the first place, they had had a very good dinner; in the second, though she understood hardly a word of what he said, she understood why he said it and that was far more important. A monologue with her was far more fruitful than an intellectual discussion with some one of his own standing, and finally and above all it was physically good to be with her. The dinner and the wine had made it clear that that was all-important. . . . He had always accepted life at second-hand and by hearsay. With her he must begin again without any ready-made conceptions whatsoever. Even the cinema, with her, gave a truer representation of life than he had obtained from all his reading. His hand slipped to her arm and held it, warm, strong, rotund. . . . What a good sort she was! That was the important thing to be in a world so withered of humanity that it could tolerate and even take pride in its slow dragging calamity.

As he caressed her arm he thought whimsically that he had found much the same sort of comfort from the contact of the pup, Sydney, nestling against his breast as he took him home. There was a dog in one of the pictures, a marvellously trained animal who evaded policemen with great skill. Extraordinary how satisfying that spectacle was, something in it emblematic of the whole of human activity, always, always evading policemen.

"You can talk here, you know," said Cora. "It isn't a theatre,"

"I'm so interested," said Trevor. "I did like that dog."

"He is good, isn't he? I daresay it's like people. Some people are born for the films and some aren't. I daresay it's the same with dogs. . . . But I shall be jealous if you like dogs so much."

He gave her arm a sharp squeeze, so happy was he at the confession of her interest in him.

She leaned towards him and whispered:

"It's like I always wanted it to be. Someone good-looking and with a nice voice like you."

He raised her hand to his lips and kissed it, and he looked with an intense sympathy at two couples in the row in front of them who, sitting low in their seats, were locked in each other's arms, murmuring, lost to everything in the world.

The pictures flickered on. Cora sighed and sank happily into the new development of their friendship, and Trevor's heart grew big within him as he became more intensely aware of the warmth of the humanity crowded into that dark, narrow room for the distraction of their senses while their deeper powers groped into the life they shared. It was the first time he had felt at all the power of a crowd, the first time he had ever gazed into such depths without dizziness and disgust. Contact with its force made him want to laugh gleefully at its languid aimlessness, and he had just begun to enjoy that when suddenly the scene was blank and where the picture had been appeared an announcement that an air-raid was in progress, and the dwarfed manager, standing on the cracked piano, assured the audience that the theatre was bomb-proof, and that there would be a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes in which to take other shelter. . . . But no one listened. The unity of the crowd was broken. Lovers sprang apart. Women screamed. There was a rush to the doors.

"Take me home," said Cora. "That's all right; the floors are concrete."

As they passed into the street guns were heard, and with

each thud the scurrying men and women ran faster. A woman near them cried :

"O God! O God! O God!"

And a man who was running with a queer swaying gait swooned. Two policemen ran to pick him up.

It was only two minutes to Cora's flat. The coloured maid admitted them. Her face was a yellowy grey.

"It's all right in here," said Cora. "It couldn't get through the top floor. We'll have some supper presently."

The maid was reassured by their company, and Trevor began to realize how frightened he had been. His legs trembled, and he could not make his lips frame words.

"Ha! Ha!" he said. "This is ridiculous. I've never minded it like this—before. . . . It was being in that crowd and that poor devil fainting."

The guns began again, a big gun far away, a small one barking nearer. He said :

"I must go home to the pup."

"Dogs don't mind."

"Yes," he said. "I suppose they think that anything men choose to do is all right. . . . Men are just the same with governments. I haven't minded it so much before. I just looked on . . ."

"Don't talk, dear," said Cora. "It isn't good for you."

She put her arms round his neck and drew his head down until staring at her lips he made quite sure that there was not a vestige of red paint on them, and he kissed her and sank deep into her happiness.

For a couple of hours the guns roared on, but they heard nothing, only each other's words, the blood beating in their hearts, the sweet sighing breath of contentment.

He awoke in the morning to see Cora coming in with a breakfast tray.

"How you sleep!" she said. "It's nearly eleven o'clock, and Estelle has gone out to do the shopping. There were only forty people killed last night, and not much material damage done; so the paper says, though they always lie."

As she laid down the tray he caught her in his arms and hid his face in her neck :

" You dear, dear creature," he said. " I love you."

" Does it matter your being so late ? " she asked.

" No. Nothing matters. Nothing, nothing matters."

IV

HOBDAY, TREVES AND TREVES

MR. HOBDAY took himself very seriously. He had been head of the firm for nearly thirty years, and in his view Hobday, Treves and Treves and the British Empire were in their fortunes intimately linked. He read the *Morning Post* for his politics and *The Times* for its Law Reports, and when the *Daily Mail* dared to question the omniscience and omnipotence of Lord Kitchener he called his staff into his sanctum and burned the rag with the following homily :

"It is the soldiers who are going to win this war. The civilian who doubts the capacity of our tried and proven soldiers to win the war is a traitor to his King, to his country, and to his own best self. We have never lost a war yet and we are not going to lose this one. Every young man in this country is now Kitchener's man, and every old man wishes to God he were thirty years younger. . . . M—m. You may go."

Mr. William Treves was a bachelor of fifty, but he had a fatty heart and assumed responsibility for Mr. Robert's family when the junior partner obtained a commission and was posted to a recruiting depot at York. . . . Only the office boy and the most junior clerk were required by the Army, so that the staff of this old and honoured firm remained intact, but as Mr. Hobday continued to read the *Morning Post* war fever raged long after it had disappeared from Trevor's thoughts. He felt completely estranged and like a wicked cynic among youthful idealists. It was extraordinary how untouched the firm remained,

Business was good, better than ever indeed. A great action between two mining companies in South Africa which had been maturing for years ripened at last for hearing, and enormous fees began to accrue due. Mr. Hobday was generous, and though he did not raise salaries he granted war bonuses in consideration of the rise in prices.

This of course did not affect Trevor, whom in his patriotic fervour Mr. Hobday had decided to ignore—a young man in his early twenties loafing about an office when there was a man's work to be done in half a dozen different quarters of the globe. Up to a point Mr. Hobday's resentment was just, for there was no doubt about it that during his second year Trevor did loaf. He sulked and thought morosely of his thwarted desire to stay at Cambridge with a Fellowship, but that life had also been destroyed. The accounts he had of Cambridge from his friends were heart-breaking—a few elderly dons, a few black men, soldiers and nurses. . . . That perhaps had hurt Trevor more even than the loss of his friends, and such capacity for hatred as was left in him was vented upon Mr. Hobday with his *Morning Post*, so pleased, so excited, so exalted even while the world which the young man was preparing to enter was blown to Hell. . . .

Mr. Hobday looked the part of the John Bull patriot except that he was not ruddy. He ought to have been, but his life of hard, sedentary work had made his complexion a parchment grey, belying his native character, which was that of the bluff English squire. He inspired awe in his staff, confidence in his clients, and when he said that the war was the summit of Great Britain's destiny there were at least three hundred people who would accept that it was so because he could make things uncomfortable for them if they thought or tried to think otherwise. Trevor calculated that there must be about a million Mr. Hobdays in Great Britain, and when he multiplied them by the people whom they would influence he despaired of the war's ever ending.

On the morning after the air-raid he found the office

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in a new spasm of hatred of the Hun. Work had ceased while a symposium was held on the question of reprisals. The cashier, a thin, weedy little man with a voice like a captive raven, said:

"We must give them Hell! Bomb Düsseldorf, bomb Cologne, bomb Berlin!"

And the Common Law managing-clerk, who had an ingenious mind developed by long practice in annoying legal opponents, suggested that German prisoners should be returned to the Fatherland by aeroplane, two of them tied together for every civilian killed, three for every woman, four for every child, and dropped into the streets of the Rhine towns.

Mr. Hobday came in at that moment and applauded the suggestion.

"Very good, Mr. Barnes. Very good. I'll write to the War Office about it."

Trevor had left the group as Mr. Hobday came in. He could not stand the man on these occasions.

In Mr. Robert's absence Trevor had been allowed to use his room. Mr. Hobday looked in and said:

"Trevor, I want to speak to you a moment."

Trevor followed him into his sanctum. Mr. Hobday, with the rudeness which inspired so much confidence in clients, kept him standing for a quarter of an hour while he unfolded the *Morning Post* and laid it open at the leading article, on his letter-basket, and Trevor thought:

"This is all so out-of-date. People don't behave like this any more. There isn't time for it, and the world doesn't want important people."

Mr. Hobday coughed.

"You were late again this morning."

"Yes."

"I happened to look into Mr. Robert's room. On your desk I found a novel of a character of which I cannot approve, a few serious historical works, a volume of poems, and a number of type-written sheets of what appeared to be verses,"

"Yes."

"Ordinarily I have made it and have kept it as a rule not to interfere with my articled clerks. We give them the entry to our business and they learn or not as they please. . . . Your father is a very old friend of mine. We were articled together here in this office."

"Yes."

"In those days young men worked."

"Yes."

"Now young men are fighting for what we worked for."

Trevor looked steadily at Mr. Hobday, marked his ample waistcoat, his swelling neck that thrust out the lobes of his ears, his staring, expressionless eyes, and he could not help remarking:

"But—we don't like what you worked for. We don't want it."

Then he gasped, not at his own audacity, but at the suddenness of this expression of his deepest and most hidden thought. He knew that he had stumbled on a profound truth. Mr. Hobday's eyes started out of his head. His fat hands fumbled in the air for a moment, then reached out for the *Morning Post*, to which they clung for comfort. . . . It was a terrible and yet a delicious moment. Mr. Hobday could not face it. After a gulp or two, he said:

"You are to be pitied, Trevor. I pity you. It is of course not my affair what you choose to do, but, if you are going to continue to put in an appearance here, I must ask you to observe the hours of the office, which are from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and if you do propose to occupy Robert Treves's chair while he, like a man, is doing his duty, I trust that you will study the Law and put frivolities from your mind." He paused, and then with a more kindly indulgence resumed: "Come, come, Trevor. You will inherit a great business, a great position. In the reconstruction of the old country you should play a great part. The Law has made England what she is. We are fighting for the Law. . . ."

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"Against humanity," thought Trevor with a flick of his mind which made him realize that it was no good his saying anything more. What he had already said had hurt Mr. Hobday, but had produced no further impression.

"There must be an end to this slackness," said the Head of the Firm. "Any man who slacks now is not earning his keep. We need all the hands we can get in this big African case. . . . If you don't propose to help us with that then I propose to use my influence with the War Office to obtain you some work—with a commission, of course—which can be done by an unfit man. After all, it is hardly fair that you should be allowed to finish your articles while thousands of young men have theirs suspended. . . . Equality of sacrifice, you know. We must all suffer for our country's good. . . . Two of the clerks are going, and it is work that would interest you and would be a very valuable experience. It is a case in which—ah!—millions are involved."

"History," said Trevor, "has become a matter of millions."

"I am not jesting," said Mr. Hobday severely, and Trevor, who was really interested in the train of thought that he had started, strove to explain:

"I only meant that the individual is swamped. There is a point at which the mind cannot take in anything further."

Mr. Hobday smiled indulgently:

"Ah!" he said. "We are suffering from neglect. After all, it is perhaps a good thing that a young man of position here and there should be spared. A good year's work now for the remainder of your articles will be the making of you. Who knows? Perhaps by then we shall have won our case *and* the war, and the good relations of this firm and your own will continue. There is no more public-spirited and patriotic profession than that to which we have the honour to belong. . . . If you will go to Mr. Barnes now he will be glad of your assistance in bringing

the briefs in our African case up to date. . . . Good morning! Good morning!"

Trevor withdrew in a state of eruption. Mr. Hobday's completely innocent lack of scruple baffled him. Either the War Office or the African case! . . . But how exactly typical! In the Hobday world one must work for the comfort or the protection of Hobday. In fact, it was Hobday and not the world that mattered, and it was for the Hobdays that young men were left friendless, ambitionless, and dispirited.

His first impulse was to fling out of the office then and there; but then he reflected that it was only for a year, and that if he did obey his impulse it would mean good-bye to London, and stagnation in the even more congenial atmosphere of the manufacturing North. He sat in Mr. Robert's room for a long time wrestling it out, and came at last to the conclusion that he was an idiot for being so angry about it. Lawyers were a hopelessly narrow and cloistered class who were absolutely incapable of realizing that the world had passed them long ago, and even in its disputes was gradually learning to do without them.

While Trevor cogitated Mr. Hobday wrote a friendly letter to his father, in which he said:

"The boy is sound at heart, sound as a bell. He was very badly hit by his rejection from the Army, but he has picked up bravely, and after some friendly discussion with myself has come to the conclusion that he can best serve his country by preparing to follow in his father's footsteps. I am wasting a good deal of my time on a Tribunal listening to cowardly riff-raff who cannot think impersonally even in a grave national crisis and in certain other directions—of which I am not at liberty to speak. I am making myself felt. If the war continues, that is, if victory should be long in coming, I should be able to place the boy where he could gain both valuable experience and invaluable influence. . . ."

The river must flow along its bed, but Trevor was conscious of a new source of vitality for which he could find

no pleasing course. He was out of the war, was no longer even emotionally engaged in it, and had begun to realize that he was condemned to speak an unintelligible language since he had no dogma of any kind. . . . Even Harry Hardman had had his dogma :

"A generation's got to go so that all the subsequent generations may be free."

That had once satisfied him too, but it did so no longer. The tragedy had overstepped the capacity of the human mind. Everybody was lying. It was better, therefore, to keep silent, and he was sorry he had told Mr. Hobday the only truth he knew, which was that he and his contemporaries had never wanted the world for which Mr. Hobday and his contemporaries had worked.

For the present Cora was a sufficient answer to all that—Cora, and Sydney, and Mr. Ysnaga, and the old man with his little dogs.

Elated by the still tingling satisfaction of that Experience, Trevor went to the other end of the vast, dingy suite of offices to Mr. Barnes's room.

"Hello! Barnes," he said. "Mr. Hobday has asked me to help you with your big case. Terrible waste of money in war-time, isn't it?"

Mr. Barnes was a snuffy, keen little man with a brown moustache and eyebrows that were almost moustachios, beneath which peeped and darted two little short-sighted brown eyes. He had hardly any nose with which to support his pince-nez, which he wore impatiently rammed down almost to his nostrils. Even then they slipped about, and had made blood-red furrows on either side of his nose.

"Waste? Waste? . . . It's got to be settled before the war's over or there'll be German money working on the other side. If we lost a case like this it would be as bad as losing the war. . . . It's British money and a good title against German money and hanky-panky. . . . If you're going to help, pull up your shirt-sleeves and buckle to."

Trevor drew up a chair to the table and began to finger the mountainous pile of papers, briefs, proofs, maps, reports, accounts. He liked Mr. Barnes's enthusiasm.

"It's a big fight," said the little man. "It's years since I had such a big fight, but there aren't the men at the Bar now that there were in the old days. Nothing like it. The Law's getting too technical. That's what it is. And the big men at the Bar have to specialize. The big money's for the man with a head for figures. . . . What I used to love was a straight fight without any law in it to speak of, just a little skirmishing on pleadings, and then a knock-out in cross-examination. But pleadings aren't what they were, and these new men can't cross-examine for nuts. They're afraid of hurting anybody's feelings. . . . You can make yourself very useful on this, Mr. Mathew. I always think myself that's it's a good thing for an article to make himself useful. You never know where it's going to come in when you practice yourself." . . .

Trevor was soon immersed in the papers, reading figures which made his head swim, and struggling to find some coherence in the long tale of concessions and prospector's rights and licenses and flotations, registrations, and at last he began to perceive that the dispute was over a piece of land about twice the size of Yorkshire, on which there were or were going to be or were said to be gold-mines, copper-mines, and behind this particular dispute there was a long history of disputes which had been settled, some in Court, some by arbitration, some by violent financial means, until at last one set of interests was grouped against another. . . . Millions of money had already changed hands, several companies had been floated and wound up, but what struck Trevor as extraordinary was that in twenty years neither gold nor copper had been forthcoming. Apparently one company after another had spent its subscription in litigation and had disappeared or been merged in another company which took up the struggle.

"A big fight, eh?" chuckled Mr. Barnes.

"Devilish big," replied Trevor. "I can't size it up yet."

"Of course you can't. You just let it soak you up, and then you can't think of anything else. . . . There's big money behind it and big men. I often lie awake and think how wonderful it is that this sort of thing is going on all over the world to keep old London going, and little me sitting in a quiet room fighting it out for 'em, for the men who've risked their money and the men who have risked their lives."

"Money first?" asked Trevor with a smile. He was beginning to enjoy himself immensely. There was something delightfully innocent about these good people who had the newspapers as a screen between themselves and facts.

"Well, not exactly that," replied Mr. Barnes. "I didn't mean to convey that, but if a man loses his life—well, there's an end of it; but if he loses his money—well—he wants to know about it."

"How long will the case take?"

"Three months, perhaps longer. It certainly won't be finished this term, and then there's sure to be an appeal, and with luck we shall carry it to the House of Lords."

"Years, then?"

"Oh! certainly."

Trevor sank back into his work on the vast pile of documents, wishing that he could share or even begin to understand Mr. Barnes's enthusiasm, but any human or personal interest there might ever have been in the affair had disappeared, and it had become a long confused struggle between rival organizations. There was a pile of Counsel's opinions about as long as the *Origin of Species*, and Trevor decided to begin on that, but he was soon floundering, for there was little concern for facts in these type-written sheets. Indeed, he could not find much else but innumerable references to cases.

"These don't seem to be of much value," he said.

"No. But we have to consult Counsel. We can't put ourselves in the wrong, you know. . . ."

"How am I to get the hang of it?"

"Why should you? All you want out of it is experience of practice. . . . You can have my notes if you like. They were made fifteen years ago."

Mr. Barnes took a shabby little black book out of a drawer and threw it over to Trevor, who in ten minutes knew exactly what the case was about, and that a certain native tribe in Northern Rhodesia had sold a certain concession twice to different speculators. That was the fact: the rest was Law.

In the correspondence he was interested to find the name of Mr. José Ysnaga, who had apparently played a considerable part in the flotation of one of the original and now defunct companies.

"That's a funny name," he said. "Ysnaga."

"Mr. José Ysnaga. Oh yes. We know him. There aren't many solicitors in town who don't know him. If you want to know What's What behind Who's Who ask Mr. Barnes of Hobday's. It's a quiet firm, but deep."

Trevor decided that he had certainly been wasting his time with his academic treatment of the Law. The thought of the bland, accomplished Ysnaga flooded the whole of this dusty case with romance, and he surveyed the pile of documents with admiration. They were in a sense the creation of the wonderful Ysnaga, his gift, his legacy to the world as he swept on in brilliant and successful manipulation of the world's resources.

"He was in prison when the war began," he said.

"Was he? How do you know that?"

"From a friend of his. He is a Government contractor now, and has two factories at Bow."

Mr. Barnes leaned back in his chair and roared with laughter.

V

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IN conversation with Sydney, Trevor admitted that he was in love with Cora Dinmont, and Sydney, after a saucer of milk, was sympathetic and listened with his ears cocked as he lay on his master's stomach and enjoyed the rumbling of his voice as it came out. So complete was Trevor's satisfaction with the sudden transmutation of his existence that he had no doubt that it was permanent. He dined with Cora once a week and once a week they walked in the Park and listened to the band, and enjoyed watching the shifting crowd under the trees. Somehow the people did not look as if they were part of the place. They seemed transitory and almost ghoulish, and very often people in the street had this effect on Trevor. They were like people who had returned from some forgotten period of time, like people caught in Time and hungering wistfully for eternity, and to make themselves easy trying one masquerade after another. . . . This was especially noticeable on Flag Days, but perhaps it was only the fantastic costumes and uniforms, perhaps it was because of the vast number of temporary buildings that had sprung up in London. Many of Trevor's acquaintances had gone to work in temporary buildings, and they all acquired that temporary, transitory appearance.

But Cora Dinmont was permanent.

He took her to his rooms, and her presence clung about them so that he was no longer tortured by the absence of his friends, and she too had shed an existence the thought of which was painful to her. She made him talk at first

because she loved the sound of his voice, but after a time she began to want to understand what he said, and he endeavoured to simplify his utterances and in so doing realized how remote all his thoughts had been from actuality. It was not so easy to speak his heart out as he had imagined, though it was very easy to utter the shadows of reflections. . . . He read Hardman's poems to Cora and was ashamed of them rather than of her. They were in a faded tradition, an almost inconceivably remote echo of Donne and Marvell. They were about the war, but, like the war-people, they were transitory and temporary—and he had undertaken to see them through the press.

At first he was rather shy of telling Cora that he loved her and Sydney had the benefit of his declarations, but as she became more and more inflamed with him such speech was easier and he even began to tell her lover's nonsense. She was intoxicated with it, and was completely and fearlessly infatuated with him. He made her laugh, and her relations with men had always been serious not to say ponderous, especially since the war, and she was glad not to paint her face any more and no longer to be looking for clothes which attract attention, but to be able to dress in what would please him—quiet things, good things, for he was good and quiet and she wanted to be so too.

He was so good and quiet that she had no difficulty in fathoming his existence—the rich, easy house at home in the suburbs of a northern town, his studious and gentlemanly existence at Cambridge and in London, his vagrant attendance at the office and—herself. She was the first. His beard was hardly grown and she was the first! Nothing could take that from her, and no other woman could ever be to him what she had been, to no other woman would he turn with that childishly pathetic gratitude.

The bare thought of any other woman roused jealousy in her, and she became assiduous in her pursuit of him, and after a long and very honest struggle against it the

thought of marriage took possession of her. There was no reason why she should not have children, and who was to know anything about her? . . . She began to want a house and to imagine herself keeping it—ever so efficiently for him. Where he would have to live was far away from London, and no one would know her there. She would have a house with linen and plate and thick carpets and red paper on the dining-room walls, and a little car perhaps, and a garden with roses, pink roses, because he was so fond of them.

She often talked to him, not very truthfully, about her own home life in a little country town not a hundred miles away, and as the summer wore on she had persuaded herself that she was sick with longing for the old place—the old bridge over the river and the market-square and the Corn Exchange, where they sometimes had plays—and then she would ask him rather shyly :

“Are you going home this summer?”

“Not if I can help it. I don't want to go home. I shall have too much of it later on. I want to take you away out of this. Where do you usually go in the summer?”

“It used to be Ostend before the war. Now it's Brighton or Southend or Margate.”

“I hate those places. . . . What do you say to our taking a cottage together on the Coast? We could take Estelle and have a three weeks' real honeymoon. Besides, the sea air would be good for Sydney. I am anxious about his back legs; they don't seem to work properly.”

They were in his rooms. Cora seized Sydney and danced about with him and hugged him so tight that he howled. Then she kissed and fondled him and held him out for Trevor to caress.

“Me too!” she said, and Trevor had to caress her also. He was enchanted with her, and had no suspicion that she was not in the same condition of childish glee. He did not wish the relationship to be different in any way. For him it was perfect as it was. There was, so far as he knew, no question of money or obligation of any kind.

She was discreet and never made any attempt to intrude upon him, never came to his rooms uninvited, never rang him up at the office, where he now spent many hours of the day piecing together the romantic early history of Mr. José Ysnaga as revealed in otherwise uninteresting legal documents.

For a year his life would consist of Cora and preparation for his Final Examination. After that the deluge. In a year the war might be over and he, like every one else, would come blinking and gasping out of the welter to find out what the world was like, or to discover the new illusions under which the world would elect to live. Its old pre-war illusions were gone for ever, lost in the one grand illusion of military victory. That sooner or later must break and a new set of illusions would arise. . . . That he could be under any illusion with regard to Cora Trevor never suspected. She was so completely, even abjectly, his, as to give him an indomitable sense of possession. She was as much his as the pup, and his attitude towards her was of the same order.

Every now and then, being very acute and almost uncomfortably honest, he was haunted by a dim perception that she and the pup had taken the place of Hardman and Peto, but he put that idea from him and when it became persistent corrected it by going to see Peto in his dark room. That was very dreadful, for Trevor, now that he had emerged from the entombment of his grief, was forced to realize that Peto had stopped on the other side of the war, and that it was no use even trying to talk to him about what was going on in the world, for the world had changed and Peto and these others, broken in soul as he was in body, would never know that it had changed. They would fumble and grope for a life that had for ever disappeared—the life they had fought for, the life which in fighting they had destroyed. He could not even tell Peto he had bought a pup, for his doing so had been a desecration upon their existence to which there could be no return. . . . No; the only way out

was to read to what was left of Peto, good old stuff that told of an England that had been English. Even Dickens was too modern: the right stuff was Tom Jones and Humphry Clinker, which in solid, healthy language told of an England that took its wars as it did its drink, in a gentlemanly fashion, gouty in its Toryism, rheumatic in its Whiggery. To talk to Peto of London and the transformation in its life was unbearable.

"You know, Jimmy," Trevor would say, "things aren't the same."

And the muffled voice from behind the bandages would reply:

"No. They couldn't be without old Hardman."

That was as far as they got. Fortunately Peto's people were rich, and they had a big house down in Wales to which he could be taken. He could sit there looking at the mountains. They at least would be the same, and Peto could believe that he had been smashed up for them.

But that friendship was oozing away, and on the day when Peto was taken down to Wales Trevor knew that the end would come. It, like every other good thing, would die a violent and unnatural death.

Sometimes it amazed him that Cora was so unmoved by it all, and yet after an hour or two with his shattered friend he had to seek her out, succumb to the enchantment she had for him, and forget. She always knew when he had been to the nursing home, and was jealous and outraged by the hysteria in him. Her extraordinary physical tranquility would make him contemptuous of himself, and he wanted to be like her, imperturbable and unconscious of what was happening in the world. It was either that or another plunge into a further agony in which he must endure all the mental suffering that others had avoided through plunging into action, the hideous welter of questions to which there was no answer, because things were being done in which nobody—nobody believed, because everybody without exception was really ignorant of the world in which they lived, and everybody suddenly

had begun to wrangle about purely external and remote things. . . . No. He could not go through that again. History supplied him with no clue except that all wars were maintained with lies, that all wars had been promoted in the name of religion, and that religion had been merged in patriotism. . . . No : a thousand times no. The answer to all that was Cora Dinmont, with whom there need be no mental implication whatsoever but only a happy warming of the senses which made him strong enough to forget and to begin again, knowing that he had been wrong to accept the world as it had been before the war, and that he and his contemporaries should have said, as he so surprisingly had said to Mr. Hobday :

"We don't want what you have worked for."

That had been perfectly clear to all of them, but they had been content to wait until at last the Hobdays of the world—for they were all Kaisers, every one of them—forced them to accept their handiwork in mud and blood, forced them to accept their infernal mechanical, money-grubbing organization and to sacrifice their youth to preserve it. . . . It was too late now to do anything or to say anything. Protest in the face of the disturbance of millions of lives seemed even more indecent than the thing itself.

It was after a visit to Peto that he came to a point of crisis with Cora. Her jealousy forced her into such a consuming possessiveness that she could not endure his attention being away from her for a moment. She could hardly suffer him to eat, but wanted his eyes upon her, his hand reaching out for hers continually.

They had taken a cottage near Portsmouth for a month, and she had become very sentimental about it and tried to coax him into staying longer.

"I can't," he said. "I can only take a month's holiday. I have to keep to the rules of the office. Even Mr. Hobday takes no more."

"But you're rich, aren't you ?"

"I shall be."

"Then you can do what you like."

"No. I can't . . . if I'm working with other people."

Cora was quick enough to realize that she had made a mistake, and she covered it up with a laugh.

"If I were rich I should do exactly as I pleased. I would."

"Yes," he said with an indulgent smile. "That's the whole point of you. . . . If we like the cottage I'll take it on and we'll go down for week-ends."

She was pleased with him and said she could borrow a car for the trip.

"A car?" he said. "But nobody has cars now-a-days."

"Oh! yes, they do. Can you drive?"

"I used to have my own car at Cambridge."

She opened her eyes at that. He was richer than she had thought, and she sat with her eyes half closed dreaming of the big house she would have with him one day. She would make him so comfortable and so happy in the cottage that he would need her always. . . . He was growing up at an alarming rate and she knew instinctively that if she did not keep a tight hold on him he would slip away from her. The life she had lived had left her womanly instincts practically intact, and the woman in her was fighting desperately to break through the habits of the automaton. She had at first been savagely maternal with Trevor and had hugged him to her as a babe to her breast, but now that he was growing she had to call in deeper and subtler powers, and she lived in anguish lest they should fail her. . . . She knew she could not drag him down to the level of the life she had lived, and she strove to raise herself to his. She loved him too much to pretend, and she who was consumed entirely in their relationship, dreaded and hated his astonishing capacity for sudden detachment, and his unvarying kind, cool consideration for her. . . . If only he would lose his temper with her sometimes. But he was always good-tempered, and, as he gained in serenity, humorous and kind.

They went to their cottage by the sea, and he wrote

to his mother and told her he was going with a party of friends, back from the front, and so could not come home that summer.

His mother, who adored him, accepted his excuse with a tearful smile, and said that dear Trevor was always so devoted to his friends and that in times like these the boys must hang together, and it was better for them to console each other than to suffer the heart-wrench of visiting their homes. She wrote all this, and more, to Trevor, and told him that it was certainly his duty, being spared the agony of the trenches, to do all he could for his dear, brave friends.

Trevor excused himself on the ground that it was better for his mother to have him restored to some kind of sanity, than reduced to a frozen and insensible imbecility by the mental strain which was as bad, if not worse, than the physical strain of the trenches, the horror of knowing that the mind of a whole generation had been put out of action. No one else seemed to think of that which to him was the hardest thing to face.

He felt it even more in the country than in London. There were no young men in the fields, none at the fishing harbour, at which a movie was stationed. It was not long before the officers on board discovered Cora, and began to visit the cottage, and, to Trevor's disgust, they knew her for what she was, or had been, and made no concealment of their knowledge. She got in drinks for them, and they turned the cottage into a kind of private public-house. Their behaviour and her easiness with them made Trevor realize that he had idealised her, and he could not help continuing to do so, though he was angry with her failure to check or even to perceive their impertinence. She never said anything to which he could take exception, and when they talked of what they considered the marvels of the West End of London she never gave any sign of being familiar with them, but all the same they knew and they did not conceal their envy of Trevor and what they regarded as his boldness. They thought

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him a queer fish, and congratulated him on his luck on being out of uniform.

Except for their attentions he enjoyed himself as he had never done in his life before. He had always been secretly a little afraid of the sea, but now he could surrender to it, let it pick him up and thwack him down on the sands, roll over him, knock the wind out of him, and he would just give in and roar with laughter. . . . He had always rather hated the wind, but now he loved to stand and let it batter at him and, when he tried to shout into it, sweep the words away from his lips, and the salty moisture of the air soothed and delighted him as it browned his face, neck and hands. . . . And Cora was such a wonderful joke in this setting. She could not be induced to go into the sea; she sulked when the wind disturbed her coiffure, and even on the sands she would wear nothing save high-heeled shoes, but in a world where it had become incongruous for a young man to be alive he rejoiced in her incongruity.

That came out strongly in the cottage also, which was very old and furnished by some amateur of village life with real oak, warming-pans, brass, Chelsea china, and pretty chintz. Cora and Estelle, whose atmosphere was that of Leicester Square, were ludicrous in it, and they could not adapt themselves. Cora was admirably domestic, but Estelle frankly and whole-heartedly disapproved. The staleness of a life of habit overwhelmed her, and she was only cheerful when the officers from the movie came in. Then she could produce wine, liqueurs, and cigars and be herself, beaming and approving, her wide smile in itself an invitation and an act of cajolery. Her manner often made it quite clear that she thought her mistress was making a fool of herself, and she shrewdly suspected the truth that Cora was not making a penny out of her young man. . . . During the whole month at the sea Cora never went near a shop, never bought so much as a pair of stockings. Clearly something must be very wrong! Long before the month was up Estelle had begun

to sulk and was even rude to Trevor, who understood at last that she, having lost her "presents," expected them from him. He gave her ten pounds to cover arrears and was astonished when she was not melted into gratitude.

She said, "Merci, M'sieu," with a contemptuous curl of the lip which hurt and rather horrified Trevor. He realized that he had made a fool of himself by introducing money, even indirectly, between himself and Cora and also, with a shock, how serious was the financial loss which he had inflicted on Estelle. Further, it was borne in upon his astonished mind how impossible it was for him to give the mistress a present which the maid would not despise.

From that time on he was acutely conscious of Estelle and knew in his heart that she despised him, and he was continually puzzling his brain to find out why. He knew instinctively that it was justified, but in his search for an explanation could get no further than a rather bewildered admission that to be good-tempered, gentlemanly, and scholarly was not an infallible recipe for life. The world, as now revealed to him, was rather overfull of women, and they demanded something more. As a substitute for his friends Sydney was a greater success than Cora, and Cora was jealous of Sydney, who was blissfully happy when Trevor threw stones for him on the seashore, but when he asked the woman to do it for him she threw them at him. As for Estelle, Sydney desired a world full of corners, round which to run away from her.

But on the whole the month at the sea was a success. It brought out for Trevor both the good and the bad of the incongruous liaison upon which he had entered. It gave Cora hope that she would realize her ambitions to be a respectable married lady, and Estelle had gleaned that, though he did not part with it, yet Trevor had money, and she was not without hope that things might shortly be put on a business footing. Perhaps after all her mistress was cleverer than she thought, and being English, knew how to deal with English innocence.

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Cora had been unable to fulfil her promise to procure a car to take them down, but when the time came for the return to London a magnificent car appeared, driven by a black chauffeur; and, though Trevor was uneasy about using it, she said that it was all right and belonged to a friend of hers who often lent it to her, and, not sorry to be saved from the discomfort of a journey in a train full of soldiers, Trevor climbed into the tonneau and sat with Sydney on his lap, his hand held firmly in Cora's lap, staring drowsily at the coloured maid and the negro chauffeur, who were engaged in incessant animated chatter. . . . Here again was incongruity! Trevor Mathew, article clerk, sceptic and anti-patriot, being conveyed with his innamorata in a car, so magnificent that only the most active patriotism could have earned it in war-time, through the lovely somnolent southern English countryside, over which a spell seemed to have been cast so that it was as though all hope had gone of its ever waking from its slumber. The soul had gone out of it. Soldiers had trampled its commons and heather into dust. Its woods had been devastated. Its smooth roads had been broken up by excessive and increasing traffic. . . . A dead countryside. . . . A brilliant machine darting through it back to the seething vat of new life in London. . . . There was a keen satisfaction in the powerful machine, in which Cora was certainly appropriate. It was he here who was out of place, and this again he enjoyed. Life had become so tragic that it could no longer produce anything serious, but it could and did evolve some wonderful jokes.

VI

LONDON

THE car glided through the mean streets by which London is approached from the south, swung over Westminster Bridge, and swept commandingly up Whitehall, where people turned and gazed with admiration and surprise.

"I expect they take me for the Commander of the Turcos," said Trevor, and Cora slapped his hand and laughed.

"You are almost as brown as a Turco," she said. "I have had a lovely time. I shan't like my stuffy little flat after that sweet cottage. I wish you'd take me home with you. I don't want to be without you, Boy. . . . Why should I be? . . . If you've got money you can make heaps more. We could have a lovely time. . . ."

"We were very happy as we were."

"But we hadn't been together then—I can't bear the idea of your going away. . . . Don't go, Boy. . . . Don't go. Stay with me to-night, and then we can talk it out to-morrow. . . ."

"They're expecting me."

"Stay and have supper, then."

He consented to do that, for he was reluctant to terminate what had been his first complete experience, his first period of real intimacy with another human being, and the idea of returning to his solitude had become repugnant to him.

When the car stopped it seemed at least three times too big for Gerrard Street, and he felt curiously ashamed of it and wished he could disown it as far as the loungers

of Soho were concerned. After all, his attachment to Cora was romantic and he resented these Italians and Frenchmen, fat washerwomen and lean waiters taking, as they obviously did, a cynical view of it. . . . The negro chauffeur carried the luggage up, his as well, and grinned in anticipation of a tip. So powerful was the influence of the opulent car that Trevor gave him five pounds and felt that it was a mere trifle. . . . Money, like everything else, had broken loose and become light and fluid.

In the flat Trevor became painfully conscious of Estelle's black eyes balefully upon him. Like the car in Gerrard Street, she seemed at least three times too big for the flat. Trevor tried to persuade himself that it was only the effect of returning to London from the sea, but before very long he had to admit that Estelle was definitely hostile to him, that he was in her way, and possibly in Cora's, who was blissfully unconscious of what was going on. She, devoted creature, was intent only on not letting him out of her sight. She could not endure it. He might suddenly grow into another Trevor altogether. He might at any moment say good-bye, as, according to the ethic of her world, he was perfectly entitled to do, for according to the ethic of her world she had merely made a fool of herself and had offended against the rules. He might—he might meet some girl of his own class, some one whom his mother would be pleased to welcome. He might break down and go from one woman to another. . . . And none of these things could she bear. She had made him so strong and so handsome and so gay. Of course, something would happen if she let him go.

She clung to him while Estelle in gaunt disapprobation prepared a very meagre supper.

"Darling," she said, "you don't want to leave your darling. Didn't she make him happy? Didn't she make him comfortable? Wasn't she kind to him and his little dog? . . . See, Sydney wants to stay"—Sydney was asleep on the white Angora hearthrug—"Doesn't my darling want to stay?"

In the mirror of the black walnut sideboard Trevor could see a reflection of the bedroom with its pink ribbons. It had been prepared in their absence with a pattern of pink roses festooned about blue ribbons.

"Oh! my God!" he said.

"What is it, darling?"

It had become impossible for him to stay. Never, never could he go into that room again.

"To be quite candid," he said, "I hate this flat. I hate Soho. I hate the waiters and the washerwomen, who look as though they knew everybody's business because they know what everybody's business is."

It struck him that this was a very odd speech to be making, but he could not take his eyes off the pink-rose wallpaper reflected in the mirror.

"You don't like me," said Cora.

"Oh! Don't talk nonsense. I like you better than any one. I love you. I've never been so happy with any one. You are one of the best creatures that ever lived."

"But you're not happy now. You're cross with Dorothy. Is it because of the car? . . . I did want a drive with you more than anything, and . . . and . . . it's the only car I knew . . ."

He could not resist his curiosity.

"Whose car is it?"

"You won't be cross with me if I tell you?"

"No. No. Of course not."

"It's . . . it's Ysnaga's."

"Ah!"

"You're not jealous?"

She looked at him eagerly. Ah! How pleased she would have been if he had been jealous! She clung to him and looked up into his face. Trevor was seized with an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh. Was he jealous? Well, perhaps, a little. . . . Her eyes searched his, and to avoid her scrutiny he lowered his eyelids.

"God knows," he said. "You don't understand."

"What don't I understand?"

"That one doesn't want always to be happy."

"I can be terrible too. You know I can be terrible."

"Let me go to-night, Cora," he said. "It has been very good down there, but in London it isn't the same."

She understood at last that he could not stay, but because she thought him jealous she felt a little safer and withdrew her opposition.

"It isn't the same here," she said. "No, I'll leave this flat if you don't like it. . . . Can't we have a house?"

"No. No. We're back in London, and I'm only here for another year, you know. . . . Less than a year now."

For a full two minutes she sat staring at him, longing to say something, but at last she burst into a passion of weeping, laid her arms out on the table and rolled her head from one arm to the other wailing:

"I love you. . . . I love you. . . . I love you."

He tried to comfort her, but in vain, and at last looking up he saw Estelle standing in the doorway glaring at him. She jerked her head towards the front door and, acting on her suggestion, he crept out and was out in the street before he recollected that he had left his bag and Sydney. He decided not to go back for them and walked to his rooms, where, in his overwrought condition, he could have sworn as he entered, that he heard Hardman's jolly laugh, and Peto saying:

"At last the old are not going to have it all their own way. The young are going to live!"

He was alarmed and disappointed, because he had thought that he was rid for ever of hallucinations and the haunting sense of his friends never having been away at all. Of course he didn't believe in ghosts or anything of that sort, remnants of personality or whatever the spooky people called it, but there were odd noises in his room and Sydney had sometimes bristled and barked at nothing in particular. . . . What beastly gloomy rooms they were! No one but three raw young idiots would have rented them—at such a price too!—and taken such a pride in them. The big

living room was all doors and draughts. Even the books could not make it a solid place. Poor books! Most of them had been Hardman's, the devout reader who had a marvellous digestion so that he could gulp down all the moderns as they came from the press. And poor moderns with their social conscience and sociological abstractions which they mistook for people! Not much was left of them now that people had become more ghostly even than their abstractions. Ghostly figures in khaki creeping back out of the tragedy into a new impossible London full of loverless, husbandless, childless women, ghostly too in their efforts to conceal their bewilderment as the men through whom they hoped to live were forced away from them.

Trevor sat alone in his room and stared at the doors through which his friends used to appear in the morning to discuss on their way to the bath the doings of the previous night. Peto always dined out. He frequented middle-aged gentlemen who possessed good cellars or gave him dinners at the Athenæum or the Reform. Hardman, on the other hand, patronized concerts, the theatre, political meetings, for he loved humanity in the lump. Details hardly interested him, and certainly never disgusted him as they did Trevor, who could be upset and shaken to the bottom of his not very stable philosophy by a man's ears or a woman's ankles. All Trevor's knowledge of the old indolent, loquacious London came through Hardman, who had loved it and designed to live in it. . . . But that was all over: no more Hardman, no more London. It had been swamped in a tidal wave from the provinces and from every country in the world.

"No," thought Trevor, "I can't stand it. I can't stay here. This house is too old. Everything and everybody pre-war is terribly old, really on the other side of the grave. . . . I shall be glad when my year is up."

He smoked pipe after pipe, and though he was terribly sleepy he could not drag himself to bed. He did not want to sleep. He wanted to have done with this room that

contained his old London and was still so alive that imaginary voices could be heard in it, and he was uneasy in his mind about Hardman. He felt uncomfortably that he had never known but had only admired him, as everybody did. Hardman had always been a myth. Things had been miraculously easy for him. At Uppingham he had been easily first, both in games and scholarship, and long before he went to Cambridge his reputation preceded him, so that without effort or floundering he had only to be himself. His powers in every direction were never criticized or questioned, and his reputation went before him up to London, so that there too he could without effort just be himself. He was so gracious that it was both an honour and a delight to be his friend, so charming that it was impossible to know him. You were so happy in his presence that you never bothered about the facts of his life. There was only one fact, and that was himself. Nothing that he did was half so important. . . . No doubt his mother had a lock of his baby hair. His poems were hardly more than that, something intimate for his friends, but not for the great world. . . .

All the lights in the room were on. There was no room for doubt about it. The door opened and Hardman came in wearing his horrible old dressing-gown and the shabby, torn pyjamas which he loved because they were the first suit he had bought at Cambridge—twelve-and-six—and Father Ignatius had walked into the shop in his monkish garb and fur hood and passed a blessing on him. He slid into the corner of the Chesterfield, and sat with his legs out and his hands caressing his rather plump wrists. He was very happy and pleased with himself, and, as he always did when he was going to talk at length, he began to twist his forelock, which often broke away from his smooth hair and tried to hang down into his eyes.

"You're all wrong about me, you know, old man. I was just born charmed. Everything was so delicious that I just gaped at it. I mean really everything, even horrible things. I kept outside it all. That is quite easy

if you stop growing, but it is a rotten thing to do. I did it. I was never touched by anything or anybody, never established connection with anything, and people loved me because I was untouched. It is very easy to do things if you are like that, and such fun, because you don't really do them. Women are like that, and that is why they are such frauds. . . . Well, I was afraid too. Women loved me because I was a fraud, and could play their game, and they knew I was safe because I couldn't betray them without giving myself away. They used to say that I took them seriously. Seriously! I was cleverer than any of them. How could I take them seriously when I was such a joke to myself? . . . Well, that's modern love. It is all in the hands of the women. I had my fill of it, and none of you ever knew, none of you, but every woman I ever met knew, but they never gave me away and I never gave them away. They love their fraud so much that they cannot stand the real thing, now I . . . I couldn't ever be a real soldier, but I had to pretend to be a poet going into the war flying the banner of an æsthetic emotion. . . . It doesn't matter, because we are all such liars. . . . I think some of us hoped that the war would turn out to be a real thing, but it didn't. It is a colossal fraud, the sum of all our lies. I believe the women know it too, but they won't give themselves away. There never was, there never will be, a real Me, but just a baby gazing enchanted, greedily and excitedly at all the new toys coming into being—aeroplanes, submarines, motor-boats, gas-masks, tin-hats, Colonial soldiers, Americans male and female, camouflage, and all the other hard inhuman words coming into the language, so that one can only talk comfortably in polyglot slang, a kind of baby-language. . . . I'm typical, you know, a stunt. Well, I always was a stunt, and shall be a bigger stunt than ever. . . . Some things I did really like—good claret, breakfast with a brilliant talker, trees and delicate tea-cups. That is all. If I hadn't invented myself as a poet I could never have gone. . . . Peto could, but I couldn't, and you might

have done in the first rush, but whenever I couldn't stand it I went sick. Being a poet it was easier for me to go sick than for the others, and when I was sick I wrote a poem and that damned fool Cherryman published it. I'd never written a line in my life until Cherryman took it into his head that I was a poet. . . . If they only knew; it's much easier to be a poet than a soldier nowadays, a *real* soldier. There isn't, there can't be such a thing, because, like everything else, war is a trade and no longer an adventure. . . . And when you come to think of it, that is probably the reason why we won't grow up, we moderns, because we don't want to be tradesmen. . . . The tradespeople! How scornfully we used to hear that said, but we are all of us tradespeople now, and probably we are quite right in our instinctive perception that in the long run the war is going to be good for trade."

The extraordinary thing was that, just as in the old days, when Hardman talked Trevor had to listen. He could not help himself. The voice drawling on enchanted and hypnotized him. As it ceased he pinched himself, and told himself that Hardman was not really there, but that was no good, for Hardman *was* there wrapping his old dressing-gown round him, pulling together his tattered pyjamas, reaching out for a cigarette, getting up sleepily and saying:

"Good-night."

There was no doubt about that. His voice droning on might have been a recurrent memory, but those two syllables rapped out sharp and clear and Hardman walked away with his slow, indolent gait, and slowly the door was closed. The room was brilliantly lit, the curtains were drawn. There was not a shadow anywhere.

Trevor jumped to his feet, and, with his heart thumping, ran to the door, opened it and looked into Hardman's room. It was in darkness. He turned on the light. It was empty, but he went to the bed and felt it to make sure that there was no one concealed in it.

"But it *was*," he said. "It *was*. I couldn't have invented all that. Harry never had anything to do with women. It must have been me talking about myself. . . . No. No. No one was ever charmed with me. . . . But one knew. It is true so far. One knew that Harry would have to die because he couldn't go on."

It was some time before he was satisfied that Hardman was not there. After all there *might* have been a mistake, and he *might* have returned. It was so admirably right that Hardman should have died in his young perfection that it was scarcely credible that it could have happened, except that the incredible had become the rule. . . . Perhaps the inevitable things had been postponed for so long that they were all happening at once. . . .

So strong, however, was the sense of Hardman's presence that as he closed the door he returned his friend's "Good-night," and that in some obscure fashion settled his conscience and he was able to go to bed and to sleep, though he missed Sydney, who was in the habit of lying in the crook of his knees.

In the morning the first proofs of Hardman's poems arrived with a preface by Cherryman, a journalist who had installed himself skilfully for the duration of the war, first in a mysterious new Government department, and secondly as the patron of soldier-poets, thus providing for his material and his social welfare. There was no harm in Cherryman except that he simply did not know a poem from a fly-paper. If it had been sent to him by a soldier-poet he would have printed the cover of a jam-jar as a poem, probably with a note on its obscurity. . . . Trevor chuckled over his preface and thought, having slept off his nightmare, how Hardman would have enjoyed it. The influence of Marvell in the poems was sufficiently strong to make even Cherryman feel it, and he wrote for a page or so about the Roundhead poets and the singers of the new crusade against tyranny and autocracy, and his remarks were so funny that Trevor, chuckling over his marmalade, cried :

"Oh! thank God I am out of it all, and can see how funny it is!"

As he read the poems he wished he could remember more clearly what had been said in that strange dream-conversation. . . . Something about London and women and people being so fraudulent that they were afraid of honesty. . . . There was no doubt about the dexterity of the poems. They had the same clean and rather mysterious efficiency with which their author made a fifty at cricket without any great effort or spectacular hitting and certainly with no recklessness. There was a good deal about England in them, but Trevor could find in these utterances nothing but what a certain section of London society thought they ought to think about it all. . . . London and not England was in Hardman's mind all the while—a London which, having embarked on the perilous adventure had put on a face of Gladstonian nobility as the appropriate expression, and Trevor, turning over the last page, summed it up thus:

"Women will like it."

The book was dedicated to himself and Peto, and he wondered if it would have been if the author had known that Peto was smashed and himself had spent a month at the sea with a woman through whom there was no material or social advantage to be gained. . . . There was a gain in frankness in thus thinking about his dead friend. The poems confirmed the dream-conversation, and there was no disloyalty to Hardman, for his charm was one thing, himself another. This charm belonged to his friends as an undying sunlit memory, and what did it matter if his poems helped women to sustain the particular fraud they had evolved for the duration of the war? No one had written the truth yet or anything like it, simply because no one could know the truth or divine the cause or gauge the effect. Circumstances had arisen in a world of comedians for which there was no appropriate emotion, and the only way out was to have no emotion whatsoever unless one were sufficiently simple to give way to emotions

which are inadmissible in polite society and to rely on the sanction of ignorant mass opinion to save them from indecency. Hardman, as poet, remained polite. He died before it became the fashion for young men to blurt out the truth or the facts of modern warfare.

He had been dead nearly a year, and Cherryman had calculated with that London-bred instinct, which may be called a social micrometer, that the time was exactly ripe for publication. The public was still sanguine, it had not yet begun to face facts, it was being nursed by the Press out of idealism into obstinacy, and yet it wanted something more than the repetition of enemy atrocities to make it accept cheerfully the profound modifications of its daily life which had become necessary if military organization was not to be dislocated by civilian habits.

Trevor knew his Cherryman, and his slight intercourse with him had taught him more than he had ever hoped to know about London life, as in itself, beneath all its charm and opulent security, it is. He realized that London was so huge that it had hardly begun to feel the existence of the war at all except as an excitement that was happening somehow on paper. A million young men might go out of it—but six million people remained, and they soon got used to the absence of the missing few. They accepted that a few people were responsible for getting on with the war, and that these few had the power to manipulate them and their lives, and they acquiesced good-humouredly. Of tragedy or tragic realization there was none. The appropriate thing was done as nearly as possible at the appropriate moment and decorum was preserved. For Cherryman the appropriate thing for the early autumn was the publication of the poems of Henry Hardman, and he desired to invoke Trevor's assistance, and also to exploit him socially as the sole survivor of the most promising trio that Cambridge had sent to London since Tennyson, FitzGerald, etc.

Before his holiday all this had repelled Trevor, but now it had a certain savour. He was becoming an epicure

in situations, an amateur of the ridiculous, and his curiosity was piqued to see how far Cherryman could carry his exploitation of the pathetic remnants of youth. . . . This was another remarkable thing that had happened to Trevor during his recent experiences. His youth had left him, or rather he had flung it aside as inappropriate and almost illicit in war-time London. Boys of eighteen, nineteen, twenty were being stripped of theirs; he could no longer, without acute and apparently futile suffering, keep his. As he phrased it, the world had declared war on youth and he was not sufficiently egoistic to accept the challenge or, as he put it more bluntly upon occasion, Youth had become a devilish thing to have about you. Middle-age was your only wear. And that was the most remarkable thing about Hardman's poems; they were middle-aged for middle-aged people, a sop for Cherryman—of whom more as we turn the kaleidoscope.

All this may seem a great deal for one young man to ruminate upon over coffee and marmalade and a set of proofs, but it is to be remembered that our hero—and in a socialized existence to be singular in any degree is to be heroic—had returned to London in the best of health, in a state of slight emotional disturbance and intent upon squaring up to his previous existence with which he was on the whole so dissatisfied that he could even feel every now and then that the Hobdays and the Cherrymans were right. He had certainly been wrong to revolt against them, for they were London, and London was very big and important, but it was one thing to cease to rebel, quite another to acquiesce. There was always tolerance as an alternative. Internally as well as externally it is important that one should live a quiet life in which there is some hope of a man finding out what he wants, so that in due course he can arrange to get it. To be in revolt is simply to waste time in disliking what other people want to get.

Trevor did not yet know what he wanted except negatively. He did not want to go home, nor did he wish to

pursue any further what was left of the life he had lived with his friends. In order to give himself the pleasure of doing something decisive he rang the bell and gave the landlady notice.

"There's nothing wrong, Mr. Mathew, is there? And we were so fond of the sweet little dog."

"No. Nothing wrong. The rooms are too big for me, or else I've shrunk."

"Of course it *is* lonely for you now, sir," said the landlady sympathetically, hoping to touch his heart, but he was stonily resolved.

"I shall send away Mr. Peto's and Mr. Hardman's things, and I shall sell my own. . . . Cambridge in London induces a certain putrefaction."

"I'm grieved indeed, sir. We could have found you another gentleman. There are lots of gentlemen coming up to London to go into the War Office and the Admiralty now that every one has got to be a soldier. . . ."

"I shall sell up at once," said Trevor sharply. "And I will give you three months' rent in lieu of notice."

"Oh! thank you, sir. . . . And if you are really going to sell, sir, might I have the first offer of the chest of drawers?"

Trevor nodded his assent and went into the bathroom to shave. He was offended by the shabby squalor of the room. They had never been anything else but shabby and squalid, because they had always been inhabited by men, and men are such drab, shy creatures, hating change, anything which may disturb the dust which lies upon their thoughts.

"Good God, yes," thought Trevor, distastefully surveying the untidy bathroom, with its decrepit paint and worn linoleum. "It is time I went. . . . It is time I——"

He suddenly began to think of Cora again. She had not been in his thoughts since he had left her, and he rather resented her cropping up again, although at once he knew that it was she who had made his continued existence in the London he had known impossible. . . .

If only she had not cried like that he would not have wished to avoid thinking of her, but she had cried because she loved him and because she thought he was going back to his old existence. . . . Oh, well, he would go and tell her he had broken with it and then she would be happy, and they could go on as before dining at the Café Claribel. When the fine weather went they would find some substitute for the Park. The world as at present constituted was not a place into which to bring children, and Cora was right, the one whom he had met was right. Everybody else was coming to worn-out pretences. She had none, and with her and a dog he had all that was honestly possible. The point of this reflection lay in the adverb honestly.

He called at the flat on his way to the City. Cora was in bed reading there is as yet no verb for the process of what is done to a pictorial newspaper: it is certainly not *read*—the *Sunday Herald*. Sydney was lying in her lap, and she had just finished breakfast.

Down went the *Herald*, away went Sydney, and Trevor, overwhelmed by her delight, flew into her arms.

"Cruel, cruel darling," she murmured.

"It's all right," he said in a voice almost as honeyed. "I'm going to leave my rooms. I've thought of a plan. We'll live in opposite flats. . . . You can go and look for them to-day. I don't want you to stay here. You know I have always hated it."

Cora could only croon out her ecstasy, and she kissed his eyes, his lips, his ears, and bit the tip of his nose until it was bruised and swollen.

VII

RUTH HOBDAY

MR. HENRY HOBDAY, the lawyer, lived in Bayswater, where his small family, Mrs. Henry Hobday and two daughters, was attended by eight servants. Mr. Charles Hobday, his brother, lived at Highgate, and his large family scrambled along with one maid, or a charwoman, or sometimes no assistance at all. Mr. Charles Hobday saw his brother twice a year at his office, and Mrs. Charles Hobday used to receive from Mrs. Henry every year a parcel of old clothes. Otherwise the two families were strangers to each other, because success cannot acknowledge failure, and Charles Hobday had failed. He had refused on leaving Oxford to enter the firm, he had married a lady some years older than himself who had more charm and character than money, and though he had made one or two scientific discoveries which had profoundly modified certain trades, he had allowed himself to be swindled out of the fortune he should have made. He had no commercial sense whatever, and his only steady income was derived from writing a weekly article in a paper devoted to the success of poultry-keeping, of which he knew nothing whatsoever. He had produced children as absent-mindedly as he had done everything else, and when his wife died he was so used to her that he hardly noticed her absence, especially as his eldest girl, Ruth, had grown old enough to take her place in looking after the children and his own creature comforts, meagre as they were. For Ruth this promotion was hardly noticeable, for she had served a long apprenticeship and had learned from her mother all

the twists and dodges by which ends that will not meet can be kept from slipping for ever and finally apart. Like her mother she pounced on any money that came into the house and allowed her father half a crown a week for tobacco and sundries, and for the rest treated him as one of the children, one of the seven mouths that had to be fed. Like her mother, too, Ruth despised the Hobdays, who had never been anything better than attorneys, while the Paget-Suttons had an earl and a baron in their family, and in the eighteenth century had had their town house in Park Lane and their country mansion in Northamptonshire. Ruth had still something of that atmosphere about her, a little of the air of having come up to London in her own barouche or chaise upon affairs or for the season.

She was slight and very graceful, pale, and with small but singularly well-proportioned features, a strong chin and eyes that could not but look direct. Though she was stern with him she was fond of her father, and regarded him as a shamefully used man, and it enraged her that she could not do without the hundred and fifty pounds a year allowed him by his brother. Her mother had suffered under that too, and Ruth had left school at fifteen to try and make it possible to dispense with it, but in vain. The children grew, they ate more, and their needs increased faster than her earnings. . . . Her experience and her knowledge of the suffering she was put to made her determined that the boys should not cease their education prematurely. They all had brains, character, and the breeding of the Paget-Suttons, and she would not have them wasted. She wanted them to join professions, but no power on earth could make her ask her Uncle Henry for further assistance. Sometimes when her father was not in the mood to face his half-yearly visit to the office to report on the family history she had to go in his stead, and it was there that she first saw Trevor. She marked him only as the kind of young man she wished her brothers to be, rich, easy, elegant, accepting his privileged position in the world as in the natural order of things because he

was fit for it, and had taken some trouble to make a good show in it. Eton and Cambridge had done very well for him, and he had done very well for Eton and Cambridge. . . . Ruth adored good manners, and she suffered tortures from a lack of them in the office of the Anglo-Batavian Tropical Produce Company, in which she had found employment.

Trevor had not noticed her. They met in the dark inner passage of the office, but his walk, the ease with which he made way for her, the impersonal courtesy of his attitude kindled her and made her grateful. It was all the more noticeable for being utterly foreign to the atmosphere of Hobday, Treves and Treves. . . . Yes. That was what she wanted her brothers to be, and if she could only succeed in making them so the Baywater Hobdays would be answered. Their daughters could never attract such men.

This was soon after Trevor had gone to Hobday's, and before the war broke out. She was only once in the office after that. She looked out for him but they did not meet, and she assumed that he had gone off a-soldiering and she was sorry.

Among other ideas disturbed by the outbreak of war was that which she had inherited from her mother of her father's hopelessness, and she tackled him :

"Father," she said, seeking him out in the large attic at the top of the house which he had turned into a laboratory and workroom. "I'm sure this is your chance. . . . I'm sure you could invent something that would make your fortune. The boys must go to school, a really good school, and this is the time for men like you to come into their own. . . . Besides, prices are going up and people in the City are so scared that I'm sure they won't give any increase in salaries."

Charles Hobday had hardly noticed the outbreak of war. One more infatuation of the world that had ignored and cheated him was not his affair. He supposed it would be like other wars, an excitement, a hubbub, a slow tailing

off into oblivion, and he went on experimenting without any particular aim because he had long since lost the thread of his ideas and the enthusiasm which had made it so plain and so tangible in his youth. He was enough of a Hobday, however, to regard himself and to insist on being treated as a great man.

"If they want me, let them come for me," he said. "They know what I have done. The War Office approved a specification of mine twenty years ago. Not a penny have I had from it, and of course the big people have stolen and used the idea long ago. . . . Don't bother me, child, I'm very busy."

"You're nothing of the kind, father. You are half asleep. . . . I'm sure if you looked up your note-books you will find something that they want now. Everybody says it will be a terrible war, and the Germans have all kinds of things that we haven't. . . . You can't expect them to come to you as you always say that you have never taken the trouble to consolidate your reputation."

"No more I have in a country like this which allows its best ideas to go abroad and leaves its experts in isolation."

He was visibly flattered.

"You are a good girl, Ruth, and I'll do as you suggest. I have all kinds of ideas noted down, ideas, half-ideas, hints and semi-suggestions, all the whispers of discovery which are enough for an active mind."

Charles had much of the Hobday loquacity and he was very like his brother: indeed he was exactly what his brother would have been had anything ever happened to set him wondering. Charles had attacked science with all the Hobday sense of infallibility, but without the backing of the family machinery. The Hobdays believed in the Law: science to them was one of many heresies incompatible with the Church of England attitude. Charles loved science and Charles had very properly suffered, and his sins were justly visited upon his children. And in spite of himself and in spite of his heresy there was in

Charles a great deal of the Hobday attitude towards himself. Without the family machinery he had been unable to cope with marriage or paternity or any other human and therefore external affair.

He was not a little nettled at being stirred up by his daughter. His wife had never done such a thing. She had undertaken the management of his family and his household without disturbing him, and he expected as much from Ruth. He had so often believed that he was going to make his fortune that, while hope still burned faintly in him it was damped down by the continued monotony of scepticism which paralysed him and kept him in an inertia from which it was too painful for him to stir. The mere thought of taking out his old note-books set every nerve in him twittering.

Ruth persisted :

"I am determined, father, that the boys shall go to Cambridge if they can win scholarships. They are not people who ought to be wasted, and besides it depends entirely on what they do to decide the kind of men the girls are to marry."

She had no thought of marrying herself, for she had accepted it as her destiny to retrieve her very lively young brothers and sisters from the fate which without an effort on her part would certainly overtake them. . . . London was spreading out in every direction in streets of houses all exactly alike inhabited by millions of people all exactly alike, and without a final effort on her part the young Hobdays would be swallowed up in the great anonymous unquestioning mass. . . . From long habit she thought of her family collectively, the boys, the girls, and the children, but she approached them through Leslie, her eldest brother, upon whom all her ambition was centred. She had no time really to make the acquaintance of the others, and she regarded them as adjuncts to her brother, for she had acquired business habits and did not ask the impossible of herself. The family was a proposition which she had undertaken to carry through and, but for the

war, she would hardly have realized all her difficulties as she surmounted them. With the growing pressure of the war she was faced with the alternative that either Leslie or her father must earn money. She knew that her father would see no objection to Leslie doing it, and therefore she appealed to his vanity rather than to his diminished practical sense, and by continued pressure she attained her object, and Charles Hobday began really to work. He set about it with an enthusiasm so intense that he forgot all about his article on poultry, missed it for two weeks, and lost his job, and when Ruth asked him why the usual cheque had not arrived he remembered, and in the most crestfallen way humbled himself before her, and, really alarmed, hurled himself at his experiments with explosives with a result which made him beam with confidence and for a time broke his inertia. He became so masterful that he went to see his old friend, the proprietor of the poultry journal, recovered his job, and procured a loan with which to continue his experiments in explosives to destroy the enemy by the thousand. He waxed extremely patriotic, and talked as though the war against the German Empire were a punitive expedition against an Afghan tribe. . . . And he began to talk about the Hobdays much as Kaiser Wilhelm II was talking about the Hohenzollerns, and to declare that there was more in them than the capacity for legal chicanery.

Ruth did not pay much attention to his talk, but, noting the difference his work was making in him, she endeavoured to instil into him the necessity of practical exploitation of results. He declared that he had made a first-rate discovery and had fructified an idea he had had thirty years before, and he became very mysterious about it and so inflated that he could no longer stay indoors, as was his habit, but walked about Hampstead Heath, observed the aerial defences of the metropolis and suffered agonies from a congestion of ideas. . . . Guns, search-lights, motor-cars, aeroplanes all thrilled and delighted him. This was the life for which he had always hungered,

and it had come too late. He was too old to take an active part in it all. . . . He loved to see the young men drilling, and to think of them using *his* explosives, *his* brain in their work, the great work they were called upon to do, namely the exhibition of the marvellous ingenuity of the human mind.

Charles Hobday's enthusiasm had always outrun his capacity. The Hobday in him was stronger than the Charles: the inspiration, the genius in him had always had to dodge the love of social machinery, and in that futile effort his energies had been spent, but in what he saw on Hampstead Heath both the elements in his character could find expression. His enthusiasm was supported by general enthusiasm: the war was splendid; it was wonderful; it was the great opportunity.

All this emotional excitement bubbled and frothed in him and could not be damped even when his offer to place his services at the disposal of the Government was rejected. He would find a way!

He tried in vain to enlist his brother's influence. Henry Hobday had no sympathy with a man who at fifty had to be subsidized, but in conversation he let fall that an old friend of the family, Sir Seymour Trenham, had been lent by his great chemical firm in the North to the newly created Ministry of Munitions. . . . Charles had worked in a laboratory with Trenham. That was the man! Providence always sends to the inspired the right man at the right moment.

Charles worked night and day, and one morning—rare occurrence—a letter arrived for him. Ruth sent Leslie up with it to the attic—or laboratory—and she was just preparing to go to the City when her father came running down in his tattered and stained dressing-gown and in a confidential whisper said:

"My dear, Sir Seymour Trenham . . ."

That conveyed nothing to Ruth, but she kindled to the almost intolerable excitement in him.

"I wrote to him the other day. He remembers me

and asks me to call on him at his private house. He has been lent to the Government, a most distinguished man . . ."

"Don't go before you have anything to show him, Dad," said Ruth, anxious to cool him.

"But I have. . . . But I have. . . . That's just the point."

"Really ? "

"Really, really, really."

Ruth could not resist hugging him. She kissed him perhaps only twice a year, but now she was caught up by his hopefulness, for she knew he must have been greatly stirred to have brought himself to have written.

"We'll talk about it when I come home," she said.

"Don't do anything until we have talked it over."

"But . . . but I don't want to waste any time," he said, looking rather pathetic. Ruth's affectionate impulse had almost overwhelmed him and made him want to cry like a child who has been alone rather too long.

She set out for the City, where she was irritable all day, full of a suppressed excitement which she distrusted, and feeling that, if the new adventurousness in her father came to nothing, she would not be able to go on. . . . Indeed, if nothing happened, there would be no solution of the financial problem other than that Leslie must leave school, and that would break her heart, for, if Leslie went, then the others would go too. She could keep them afloat no longer, and what would become of her ? She would have worn herself out for nothing. Already she was afraid of getting hard. In imagination she could feel that creeping over her, the insensible crust of suburbanism which she detested as the horror of horrors, for it made life one long apology. She knew them so well, the little humble people who went into London every day by train and tram, all in their hearts apologizing for their existence, clinging desperately to their jobs, haunted by the dread of losing them. . . . Never, never could she endure the spectacle of proud, clever Leslie being broken in to that, starting

at eighteen shillings a week and hoping for a maximum of six pounds.

She returned in the evening to find that her father had had an explosion so successful that he had blown out the windows of his attic, removed half the roof, and burnt off his moustache, one eyebrow, and blistered his left hand. The doctor was in attendance, but her father's ardour was unabated, and he lay sizzling, like a leaking syphon, with impatience.

"You will have to go, my dear. We can't lose a minute. There may be dozens of chemists working on the same lines. . . . I'll dictate a letter to young Trenham—I always think of him as young—and you can take it to him. Tell him of my accident, and that I have repeatedly offered my services to the Government. . . . But you have a business head. If he sees you I'm sure he will take it up. He must. He must."

Tired though she was Ruth agreed. Her firm jaw set and she determined that she would not return without having seen Trenham. Her father was not an ignoramus. He had been brilliant at Oxford, only something had happened to him and the Hobdays had treated him badly.

As she came downstairs Leslie met her and said he wanted to talk to her, and drew her into the dining-room.

"Look here, Sis," he said, "I don't like the look of you at all. You look worn out, and the rest of us are so selfish that we leave it all to you. . . . It's no good thinking about Cambridge any more. There won't be any Cambridge any more. All the fellows will be going into the Army when they leave school. One of the masters was saying the other day that it's all up with people like us, and it's true. I know lots of fellows whose mothers do what you do for us, but they're not going to do it any more. It isn't good enough. . . ."

"Don't break my heart, Leslie. It isn't so bad as all that. I should tell you if things were really bad. You know I should, don't you? . . . You mustn't begin to

think of things too young. Two years more. It's only two years now. That's nothing."

"I dunno," he grumbled. "I just feel it's all wrong. But I want to do what you want. The chaps at school think I'm something because of Uncle Henry. . . . I wish to hell the old man had blown himself up this afternoon, then perhaps we should be all right."

"Oh, Leslie, don't!"

"Yes, we should. If he was dead Uncle Henry would have to do the decent."

"It's going to be all right; really it is, Leslie. We've got to think of the others. It isn't only you. A girl giving up things isn't the same as a boy."

He acquiesced reluctantly. He knew more about their father than she did, and was most suspicious of him when he was most elated. As he turned at the door he grumbled:

"I'm giving in to you, but I'm wrong. It isn't as if I knew what I wanted to do. I don't."

"But you will know, Leslie. . . . I'm going out now. Won't you take me to the tram?"

He slung his shabby school cap on his head and walked with her, a silent escort except for one observation:

"We never seem to have a jolly time somehow. I want you to have a jolly time before it is too late. . . . You're not bad-looking, Ruth, but you freeze any one who ever looks at you. . . . The chaps I bring to the house are afraid of you."

It was not his words that hurt her, but the knowledge that he was unhappy. He must be suffering terrible to talk like that. . . . And was it true. *Was* she formidable? *Had* she already begun to harden in her defiant refusal ever to apologize for her existence, although she lived in a suburb and worked in the City?

VIII

WESTMINSTER

SIR SEYMOUR TRENHAM had taken a furnished house in Westminster because he imagined that his services would only be required for a few months, and there was no reason for disturbing his household in the North. He brought with him his valet, a cook, and a housemaid and left the rest of his domestic staff to his wife, whose ambitions to shine in the social life of London he vetoed. His wife was very wealthy, very provincial, and he was in his heart ashamed of her, because she was ashamed of the city of her origin. He had, or thought he had, accepted the Birthday Honours title conferred on him to please her, and it had only had the effect of turning her thoughts to London from which his were averted because in his early maturity he had had to leave it to find recognition of his ability. . . . He was a handsome man, who had cultivated the appearance of hard strength, and though he was not born in the North had outdone the Northerner in the qualities which they accounted virtues—shrewdness, stubborn pugnacity, conviction of superiority, but when he moved to London and was established in his comfortable house in North Street he was often dogged by a strange dazed feeling that the life he had built up in the North had nothing to do with him and had been part of a dream adventure from which he had awakened. His life, though brilliantly successful, had not been what it ought to have been. At home he had absolute power and authority, but here he had to refer to others who consulted his opinion but often ignored it. He could not longer dictate, but

had to consider others. He could no longer go straight for what he wanted, but had to negotiate and steer round awkward situations and persons. . . . The disturbance and mortification in his views were considerable, and he was glad to be alone to readjust himself. The fussiness of London at first irritated and then amused him, and Londoners seemed to him a race as foreign to the people he was used to as the French. . . . Ah! He deserved a holiday. He and his colleagues had worked for twenty years to be ready for this great emergency when it came. They at least had been prepared, and now with a good conscience he could sink into London's indolence—for his holiday. . . . A return to a bachelor existence was a good thing. His club had the best cooking in London. He made friends quickly, and was asked out to dinner where people listened awfully as he talked as one who knew about big guns and explosives. His firm's machine-gun had made good, and it was a pleasure to all to hear him—discreetly—talk about it. . . . He bought a great many new clothes, laid down a good cellar of wines, and revelled in the new note of distinction in his life. It was, of course, what he ought always to have had. He wrote to his wife every day, and promised her that if the war went on for more than six months longer she should join him.

He was treated almost with homage as one of the elect few who knew their way about in the strange new life that had suddenly crashed in upon the elegant preoccupations of the capital, and this so pleased him that he could afford to be generous. At a dinner-table he was something comfortably unmoved and solid. When ladies or literary gentlemen deplored the loss of life he would say with a snap of his wide, thin-lipped mouth:

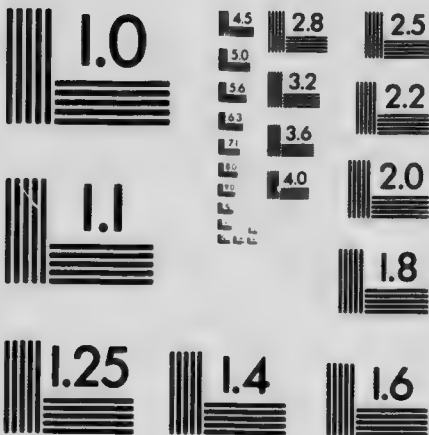
"There are plenty left."

It pleased him to contrast himself in London now with himself as he had been in London in the old days, poor and friendless and aching with unheeded ambition, and it was in such a mood that Charles Hobday's letter found him. . . . Poor old unpractical Hobday! Of course he



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remembered him with his brain seething with so many ideas that he could not sort them out. Old Hobday knew but could never apply his knowledge, though he had often thrown out hints that upon research by a cooler mind had proved fruitful. . . . Of course old Hobday would have a bad time. The paper on which he wrote pointed to a declension to the brink of disaster. In a moment of kindly caprice Trenham answered his letter.

He was out when Ruth called, and his valet, suspicious of London and London ways, was reluctant to admit her, but she insisted that it was most important. Sir Seymour had written to her father who was lying ill, and she could not return without seeing him. She had her way, and was allowed to sit in the hall until Sir Seymour returned.

What a delightful house it was! The hall was panelled, and the stairs had an oak balustrade. They were covered with a cool grey horsehair carpet, and the floor's polished surface was relieved by two beautiful Persian rugs. On the walls hung old English coloured prints.

It was the happiest moment of Ruth's life, the first time she had ever been at one with her surroundings. Her tired nerves were soothed, her weary anxious soul plucked up confidence. Her eyes traced out the pattern of the Persian rugs and lit up with the grotesque humour of the prints. The house had an atmosphere that was native to her. It was not like the houses in which she had lived, for it had a history, and it had a quality, and it was not like Uncle Henry's house in Bayswater, for there was no ostentation in it. In a little while she was quite sure that her visit was not in vain.

She was kept waiting nearly two hours. The valet brought her a cup of tea and the weekly paper, and she was immersed in these when a key was thrust into the latch and Sir Seymour came in, returning from a dinner-party at which his expert knowledge of guns and explosives had inspired confidence in various peeresses. He had begun to acquire the London manner and the possession of a social personality which, partly owing to its novelty,

he regarded as superior to that to which he had been accustomed. Never had he been a source of such pleasure to himself. It had been well worth the long exile to come so completely into his own at last. If he had had his success earlier it might have spoiled him. That he had married during his exile, and had children in his exile, was incidental, like—who was it? Oh yes, Garibaldi in South America, though Lady Trenham was not to be compared with the fair Peruvian. Was she a Peruvian? Sir Seymour stopped on the Persian rug nearest the door to decide this question. . . . Garibaldi was a great man, too, though he could not have made much of a show in modern war, and what would Napoleon have done? He would have sat in an office scientifically manipulating a great organization. The grand figures of this colossal business were invisible. Power was now to the strong, fame to the fools. . . . Sir Seymour had just begun to think of the things he might have said at his dinner-party when he became aware of something unusual in his delightful bachelor quarters. Oh yes, his valet was not there to take his overcoat, but that was his own fault for forgetting to ring the bell.

He started as he heard a small voice saying :

"Good evening. Are you Sir Seymour Trenham?"

He saw a slender grey-clad figure holding out a letter.

"My name is Ruth Hobday," she said; "my father was so pleased to get your letter. He would have come himself only he has had a slight accident, so I had to come, and I waited because there is no time to be lost."

"I would have given you an appointment. I am sorry you have been kept waiting."

"I couldn't have come during the day."

"Oh! Have you turned out for war-work?"

"No. I worked before the war."

He led her into his little study at the back of the dining-room: a panelled room with a powder-closet off it which had been turned into a case for old china, silver, and fans,

Again Ruth was overcome with a sense of finding old familiar things.

Sir Seymour opened the letter and read it perfunctorily.

"How is your father?" he asked.

"He will be in bed for a week or two. That is why it is so important. He is very excited. . . ."

"Yes. I remember," said Sir Seymour with a smile.

"Then you know what father is?" said Ruth. "People have always taken advantage of him."

Sir Seymour watched her tired, pretty face, and guessed some of her story. That kind of man always produced a large family as he gradually lost hope of producing anything else.

"And yet I remember the day when I used to borrow half-crowns from your father. . . . He expected everything too easily. A few years in the North would have done him a world of good. I wonder he never tried it."

"Father couldn't work under other people. If he hadn't been a scientist he could have been a lawyer and a partner in his father's firm."

"Ah—yes. . . . Mr. Henry Hobday," smiled Sir Seymour.

"Oddly enough I met him only a few days before I had your father's letter. . . . By the way, it isn't quite clear what your father wants me to do."

"He has invented something for the war. . . . I . . . suppose you couldn't come and see him. It is very important, because we want to keep my brother at school."

It was out before she could help herself. The luminous charm of this house had made her realize acutely the shabby penury in which she had lived, and . . . somehow, because Sir Sydney had known her father and spoke of him in a friendly way there was no reason for her to be on her guard.

"Father says people are getting thousands out of the Government, and I hear tales in the City, and father is really a very clever man. My mother used to say that if he hadn't been a Hobday he would have been one of the richest men in England."

Sir Seymour leaned back in his chair. Ruth's voice pleased him, and she was touchingly young. Obviously she had inherited her father's nice credulity and his unattainable innocence.

"He had great abilities, very great abilities, but nowadays one needs much persistence. . . . I should say you had it."

Really she was very pretty as she blushed, and so delicate and sensitive. It was all wrong, hideously wrong, that she should be anxious and worried and weighted with responsibilities.

"I shall be only too glad if I can do anything to help. . . . We scientific men have had to wait for the war to give us our chance in this country. Will you come and see me again in three days' time, and I will let you know what I think."

"About the same time?" asked Ruth hopefully.

"I will be in—for *you*," replied Sir Seymour.

"My father will be pleased. I must go back to him now. I shall have great difficulty in keeping him in bed."

She held out her hand, and her new friend took it in his.

"You won't mind my asking you," he said, "but what work do you do?"

"Oh, just office work. It was the easiest to learn."

He gave her hand a friendly shake and said:

"I'll think about that too."

He took her to the door and stood watching her as, with her heart beating and her thoughts racing, she sped along the little street. An old clock in the hall struck eleven. He sighed. Ah! after all there was nothing like youth, so easily aflame, so lightly plunged into suffering, but through everything buoyant and full of Spring. . . . How delightful it had been to find her there, and through all her intense nervousness and anxiety to hear the indomitable note of youth in her voice.

As for Ruth, she was near tears. It was the first time she had ever relaxed, the first time she had found a friend upon whom she felt she could rely.

"Oh! He is good!" she thought almost in ecstasy. "He is a wonderful man. He understands. He can even understand father, and no one has ever done that. . . . And what beautiful things he has in his house! Leslie shall be like him. He shall be a great, successful man and have a house like that full of taste and ease and comfort. . . . I must make things nice at home for Leslie. I'm sure he needs them. He would appreciate them. . . ."

The house at Highgate was impossibly dull and dingy. The furniture was good, but too, too Hobday, a name that for Ruth as for her mother stood for prosperous insensibility. The furniture bulked and bulged in the little house, and seemed to protest against its setting. It was nearly twelve as Ruth entered, but she ran upstairs at once to her father's room and found him almost feverish with impatience working out sums on a grubby piece of paper. The figures he was manipulating were enormous, running into thousands.

"Well?" he said, looking under his bandages at her hands as though he expected her there and then to pour a stream of golden sovereigns on to his bed.

"Oh, father," said Ruth; "I have seen him. I waited for him, and he is the nicest, nicest man."

"Yes. Yes." Charles tapped on the bed impatiently.

"He is going to let me know in three days. I am to go and see him. He remembers you perfectly. He says you have very, very great abilities."

"Generous," said Charles, rather petulantly. "If it had not been for your mother and your Uncle Henry I should be where he is now or higher. I consider that your Uncle Henry by his refusal to finance my early projects has robbed me of not less than sixty thousand pounds. . . ."

"Yes. Yes. I know father. But that is all over now. I'm sure that Sir Seymour will help. He spoke of you with real affection. He did indeed, and said he remembered the time when you lent him half a crown."

"Ah! ha!" chuckled Charles. "The lion and the mouse . . . But I am not like other men. I don't want

riches. I only want acknowledgment, and, Ruth, we will pay my brother Henry every penny of the paltry sums he has advanced us. I will walk into the office myself and write him out a cheque in the presence of those insufferable insolent clerks of his. I will repay him with interest. And you shall never go near the City again. I hate the City."

"Don't count on it too much, father. But I'm sure he will help. He is such a kind man, and, of course, he is very influential."

"All my life," said Charles, "I have waited for the big thing with a patience that no one has ever understood. I have refused to waste my time on trifles and trifling people, because I knew that my hour would come. How I did not know. When I did not know. . . . At last, dear child, you understand your long-suffering, far-seeing father. . . . The long view pays. It always pays. . . . Mark my words, before the war is over I shall be marching into Buckingham Palace in knee breeches and silk stockings. A tap on the shoulder, and my brother Henry will die of a rush of envy to the spleen."

Ruth laughed at him. He was like a boastful child.

"Leslie is the important person," she said. "His master says his essays are quite extraordinary, and he speaks at the Debating Society."

But Charles was not interested. His children had forced their way into the world, and he had no doubt that they would force their way through it.

"I leave that to you," he said, as thousands of times he had said to his unfortunate wife. "I leave that to you. I am no judge of character, and my way in life has been so extraordinary that God forbid that any son of mine should follow it."

Ruth knew that it was useless to attempt to argue. The antagonism between father and son was too deeply rooted for her to move it. She could only serve the one through the other by self-abnegation, and she could feel now that it only exasperated her father that while she

was helping him she should have any thought for Leslie in her mind. . . . And in this, too, he was a Hobday, leaving the parental responsibilities to social machinery. For the normal Hobdays there were schools, universities, professions, marriages, the firm: for the abnormal—nothing. The problem of providing for children without social machinery was too difficult for Charles, who therefore brushed it aside.

But for Ruth that was the ever-present haunting problem. Leslie could be something so much better than a Hobday. He, too, belonged to that life of panelled rooms, Persian rugs, silver, china, fans.

She was most deeply stirred by her evening's experience, and she lay for hours in her bed dreaming of Leslie, escaping the war through being too young for it, and gradually developing into a fine man who would inevitably find his way to Westminster, where he would live in a delightful house, be met at his front door by an efficient valet, dine out, play the host, attend Parliament and make speeches which would hold his audience spell-bound; he would travel, perhaps write books, collect rarities and rich stuffs, marry a beautiful girl of a wealthy and powerful family, and forget, forget, forget for ever the struggling squalid years in Highgate, even if it meant forgetting his sister Ruth. . . . Yes, she would even cut herself out of his life if she were ever to remind him of these days overshadowed by Henry Hobday, and the City, and people like themselves who could not make both ends meet. . . . She thought of Westminster as the living heart of the world. In the old days her mother's family had had their seat in the House as of right, as they had their livings for younger sons and their commissions in the Army and the Navy because they were known at Westminster and could move there with the necessary grace. There were portraits of a few of the old men in the house, even more out of place in it than the Hobday furniture. Elegant, witty faces they had—one of them amazingly like Leslie, and it was that elegance, that wit,

that Ruth desired him to have always, innate qualities that would mark him out and make it impossible for him to share the featureless existence all around them. . . . No other part of London that she knew had so preserved its atmosphere as Westminster, and she counted it a symbolically fortunate accident that Sir Seymour Trenham should live in North Street.

Once she had set Leslie's feet on the right road the rest would be easy. It all depended on Trenham and her father's inspiration. Perhaps after all there had been some purpose in her father's crazy obstinacy, more in it than hatred of his family and refusal to accept its stale traditions, owing to the accident of meeting and marrying her mother who, indulgent and kindly with the poor, had passionately detested everything and everybody middle-class. Hobday! How could her mother have accepted such a name in marriage? And what had her father been like when he was young? Like Leslie, perhaps: passionate, moody, silent, aloof. . . . That was possible, and without an effort on her part, Leslie would be pathetically wasted and the whole family would be submerged.

Thinking of Trenham as she lay staring into the night, Ruth said:

"He must! He must! He shall!"

IX

ROMANTICISM

For the first time in his life Seymour Trenham was consciously romantic about himself, saw himself as a figure, and he was not satisfied. His life had been devoted to the romance of big guns, huge ships of war, blast furnaces and hardened steel. He had lived among tall chimneys and gaunt erections belching fire night and day, but now in London all that had fallen away. The hard, remorseless work of his life was suspended, perhaps over for ever. London was giving him his reward in the life of which in his soul he had always dreamed, luxury, ease, leisure, and if not wit then the show of it, and if not manners, then some appearance of them. In the North people had been too hard for manners, too shrewd for wit, and they despised any attempt to put a polish on life which they liked raw and strangely savoured. In London the day only began when it was time to bathe and dress for dinner, and the enjoyment that then became possible was far keener than any that has to be had in workaday existence. One could linger over food and wine, attend a theatre or a concert, pass on to some pleasant function designed for the exhibition of pretty women—for charity had been invoked to cover the continuance of gregarious pleasures—or alone he could enjoy London as an evening city, one that only under twilight showed its true beauty and its most secret charm. There were still men to be seen in Piccadilly who bore in their faces and gait the stamp of London, old men ineffably distinguished with rare and noble English faces, men who, for all the frightful

news coming in from France, were unruffled in thought or in emotion. Trenham used to look for such men because he envied them. Their composure was deeper than his own, which was based upon knowledge while theirs was unfathomable. It was, as he phrased it to himself, the only thing in the world to which he would take off his hat. It might be dethroned from the seat of Government, but it would never lose its power because it could not diminish its influence. He knew—who better?—what could be done by work and research, but beyond that lay this certainty, this composure which in London he had always recognized and worshipped. There was none of it in the North, with its uneasy reliance on money, and probably it existed nowhere else in the world. . . . To Trenham it was like a haunting perfume with which in his youth he had been intoxicated, and now, at the summit of his success, he could not but desire it, and seek it out that it might loosen the stiffness in his mind and the hardness and awkwardness of his feelings. Tailoring could do a good deal, food and wine much more, but what Trenham hoped and longed for, was contact with persons of—quality, and he was continually disappointed, perhaps because he expected people to be as highly finished and as complete in their perfection as guns. Yet he could not desist from his hope, and every day brought him nearer his purpose of himself becoming the immaculate Londoner. He soon discovered that his reading left much to be desired, and he bought not only the books of the moment but also the classics, and when he discovered the Restoration comedy it was like a revelation to him. Here they were in being, the composed and certain men and women of his admiring dreams. Their morals of course offended him, but he could forgive that for the sake of their manners. They were indolent only because the country was indolent, taking a rest after the Civil War. . . . He lived in hope that presently his path would be crossed by some brilliant lady who would tease and please, exasperate, exult, and satisfy him—for the duration of the war. After that he

would return to the North, resume his life of hard work and domestic felicity.

He felt so confident that his life would not pass by without its romance that he made no deliberate effort to find it. He met many beautiful women, but knew at once that they had not what he desired. They could flatter but not move him. Flattery was very sweet to him, but he desired more.

After Ruth's visit to him he found himself constantly remembering her voice, not so much with words as for a certain note in it, which without egoism announced continually, "I am Ruth Hobday," and he knew that he could not as definitely say, "I am Seymour Trenham," for he was a career, a highly specialized intellect, a figure for the newspapers, two households, a war discovery, a dozen other things that could not readily be composed into a person, and the people among whom he moved were much the same; they were clothes, social successes, wives, husbands, lovers (in the technical sense), politicians, writers, military experts, soldiers, but they were not persons, and the most successful of all were merely reflections of what the crowd desired, living on phrases—"the war to end war"—"the knock-out blow"—"carry on"—"keep smiling." . . . Moving among these people Trenham could not shake off the thought of the Hobdays, Ruth and her foolish old father who had refused to compromise or to accept the subversion of science to purely commercial ends. He thought of them so much that on the day appointed for Ruth's return Trenham left his office early, and was all impatience for her coming.

In the old days in the laboratory in any difficulty, everybody had always gone to old Hobday, who from his immense learning could generally supply a hint, and his hints were nearly always fruitful. It was so now. He had thrown out a hint which, if it were worked on, would produce valuable results, but of course the old man himself was too erratic and too cocksure to do the work. In the ordinary course Trenham would have

returned such a specification because there certainly was not time to test the conclusions at which the chemist had jumped, but now it was a question of helping Ruth who, he felt sure, was suffering from financial stress. What a shame it was! He had prepared for her a letter on Ministry paper thanking Charles Hobday for his valuable suggestion, and offering him a sum of £800 for the idea. This letter he left open, and when she called, almost ill with anxiety and eager expectation, he handed it to her and turned his back on her to escape seeing her emotion.

"Oh!" she cried. "Oh! I knew. . . . Is it really worth all that?"

She was not thinking of the money, but of the importance of her father's work.

"Every penny of it," said Trenham.

"Thank you; thank you," cried Ruth, returning the letter to its envelope and looking gratefully at him for letting her see it. She could not have borne the suspense of carrying it home to her father.

"I have been thinking it over," said Trenham, "and I could make arrangements for your father to work in one of the Ministry's laboratories. . . . But I should like to help you too. The staff of my department is increasing rapidly. . . . You would like that better than the City. . . ."

"You are too good," faltered Ruth, and she added with a smile, "You don't want too many Hobdays on your salary list."

"We are taking on whole families," chuckled Trenham, "at a reduction."

Ruth without her anxieties was another being. Her youth and her natural health began at once to assert themselves, and for the first time for many months she began to talk without repression. Trenham leaned back in his chair, and savoured to the full her high spirits, and, warming to his friendliness, she told him the whole story, piecing a good deal of it together impromptu and

in flashes of understanding: her father's quarrel with the Hobdays, her mother's contempt of them widening the breach, the deplorable effect of it on her father's impracticability, her mother's illness, her own efforts to save the situation, her desperate desire to save her brother from a disastrous beginning to his career, and when she had finished Trenham began to tell her about himself, how he had fought his way up out of a poverty-stricken middle-class family, narrowly religious and hostile to any enterprise, and how he had devoted himself to the great firm in the North in which he was now a partner, and how he found himself often wondering if it had been worth while, and whether it would not have been better to devote himself to pure research, almost the only disinterested career now left open, and Ruth said:

"That is what father wanted to be—disinterested."

"It is almost an offence nowadays to be so, and one needs to be very strong to try it."

Several times during their talk the valet had entered to tell Sir Scymour that dinner was ready, and at last he came in and said that the cook was threatening to leave unless her dinner was eaten.

"Won't you stay?" asked Trenham. "Do!"

And Ruth stayed.

On New Year's Eve every year her father and she were commanded to dine at the Henry Hobdays. That was her only experience of good cooking. She had never dined at a house where the cooking was of paramount importance, and where a meal was made an exquisite transition from morning to afternoon, afternoon to evening, or evening to night. It was so here, in this delightful house where everything was perfectly in its place, and nothing was ostentatious or obtrusive in its function. What was wanted was ready to hand. Nothing that was not wanted was allowed. That was the difference between this house and Uncle Henry's, which was overloaded and full of unnecessary articles of furniture.

Ruth smiled with pleasure at the polished glass, the

shining silver, the dark pool of the smooth mahogany table which reflected the light and dimly all the gracious things in the room. She and her new friend ate in silence, so deeply did they enjoy each other's society and the delicious meal laid before them. To Ruth it savoured of magic, and not as her uncle's magnificence did, of money. That was the difference. Money here was used to serve personality and taste. It revealed in a glowing ruddy light, most subtle and most delicate, the distinguished character of her host, who sat there respecting and enjoying her silence. She felt that she could never be the same again, the force of circumstances that had cramped and repressed her was driven back and rendered impotent to hurt those for whom she had sacrificed herself. . . . She was glad that Trenham was grey-haired, glad that he was so handsome; he seemed to her perfect in his perfect setting. It was nothing to her that he was a great man, one of the grand successes of the war, a power behind the scenes, and so-on; she appreciated him as he was and as he desired to be, and it was a very few minutes before she had a sense that he and she had been sitting there for a very long time, and that they both belonged to the house and were as old as it, that is, able to enter into all the moods and all the histories it had contained. . . . He half closed his eyes as he saw how lovingly she touched the old glass, how intimately her fingers responded to the heavy, smooth old silver, soft and amazingly responsive to hands that loved it.

In the centre of the table was a great silver bowl in which pink roses floated on rose-scented water. Trenham looked from them to Ruth's face as she kindled under her pleasure. Into her cheeks had crept just the same voluptuous tenderness of fleeting delicately poised health and rapture, and upon her whole being was the bloom of fine humanity which to him was of all that life can give the most desirable. He recognized it at once. She was a person of quality, no matter what the facts of her life might have been or the errand upon which she had come.

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And she was so young, so innocent, so frail, as frail as the roses floating exquisite in their bloom as she in hers.

"After the war," he said, "I think people will be able to be more themselves. They won't be stifled and afraid, or driven by routine. . . . Many of us have been shocked into knowing that we haven't been ourselves, but have been dragged into lives that we did not particularly want, surrendering to mediocrity because it was so easy. . . . I have enjoyed to-night more than anything I ever remember, and yet nothing particularly wonderful has happened."

"A great deal for me," said Ruth, smiling at his solemnity. "I ought not to have stayed."

"Oh! yes, you ought," he replied, a little sharply. "It's high time we began to do what we want to do. What we want and what we ought in the long run generally proves to be the same."

"I wasn't thinking of that," she said. "I agree, but I was thinking of my father waiting to hear. I'm sure he believes that the whole war depends on his discovery."

"I believe that," chuckled Trenham. "I was quite convinced that the fate of the German Empire was settled when I was invited up to London. . . . But the war goes on, as regardless of Empire as of individuals. . . . When a man has a carbuncle on his neck he thinks he is all carbuncle, but he soon discovers that he remains pretty much the same. The war is like that. It is only all carbuncle to the Press now. The rest of us go on pretty much the same."

"Will it go on for many years longer?"

"I don't know. It began for no particular reason, and it will stop for no particular reason."

"I suppose people who know are sensible about it."

"It would be a bad look-out for the world if they weren't."

"As long as Leslie doesn't go," said Ruth, "I can get on without thinking about it. I don't argue. It just is. If Leslie went I should be in it, and I should have to try to understand."

They had coffee in the study, and he showed her his books, and was astonished at the amount she had read.

"Do you like pictures?" he asked.

"I've been to the National Gallery, and I always read about exhibitions in the papers, and go to see them sometimes, but it isn't the same as books, because Leslie doesn't care for them. He likes music though, especially old English music, Dr. Arne and Purcell and Handel; next to that he likes Modern French."

"You must bring Leslie to see me."

"Oh! May I?"

"I feel I know him already through you. I have boys of my own."

She started at that. It was the first hint that the whole of his life was not in this house in North Street. She looked across at him, and the momentary panic she was in disappeared. That was no affair of hers, and she would not let it intrude upon this entrancing adventure. . . . All the same the power of the enchantment was weakened, and she looked for a loophole in the conversation which would permit her to escape.

He was reluctant for her to go. The evening's intimacy with her had rounded off the life he had created for himself, and had savoured this *bonne bouche* of romanticism with which he rewarded the strenuous endeavours of his career. Human relations had always been subsidiary to his other activities, for, like the epicure he was, he had kept them for the last, to be tasted when by regular exercise his faculties should have been disciplined and refined. . . . He had watched Ruth grow in this one evening from a shy girl into a delicious creature in whom was that which he had always longed for—charm and subtlety of taste.

"Yes," he said, as she got up to go, "you must bring your brother to see me and we will have great times together. Tell your father that I will see to it that his work is not shelved, and he shall have the run of one of our laboratories, and of course a retaining salary."

This was sheer magic, and Ruth, of course, had no idea that it emanated from herself.

Trenham insisted on escorting her to the Underground Station. He wanted to send her home in a taxi, but that she refused.

The moon was shining in a clear sky, and Trenham said :

"I wonder how many years it will be before we can look at the moon without thinking of aeroplanes and the banging of guns."

"I had forgotten them already," said Ruth.

He understood that. He had made her happy. Beside that everything else was insignificant. To make one human being happy to the extent of his or her capacity seemed to him more worth while than anything else in the world, and he had had every other desirable thing.

"Good God!" he said, as he sauntered home. "What a life she would have had a hundred years ago, and this ridiculous card-indexed world can only set her to typing and shorthand!"

Ruth was hundreds of miles, hundreds of lives away from typing and shorthand. Leslie was safe! He would be given his chance and prove himself, to say good-bye to the Hobdays for ever and to pick up the traditions of his stock where they had interrupted it, and she would no longer suffer under the hatred of his father as the Hobday nearest and most offensive to him. Charles had at last proved himself. The war had brought salvation. It had broken the stagnation in which all threatened to rot away. She could smile indulgently at the rows of little houses now. Before very long they would move to London, out of Suburbia for ever, & Leslie should go to Westminster School, where his L. . . . should follow him in making a new Hobday tradition. . . . Perhaps—and here her sanguine thought began to leap into extravagance—perhaps her father was even going to be famous! That would cure the nervous oppression from which Leslie had suffered, and he would start fair and square without having unnecessary struggles to assert his quality.

Of herself, for herself, Ruth thought not at all. For one evening she had been happy. That was compensation enough for all that she had suffered. She trusted Trenham absolutely. That he had remembered her father was almost enough to prove his sincerity and decency. That he should at once have recognized the value of her father's work and have acted on it made him at once the one person out of the whole world whom she could call friend; and he had asked her to bring Leslie! To share the happiness she had had with Leslie would be an almost overwhelming joy. She arrived home tingling with the anticipation of it.

Leslie opened the door to her. He had been working all evening at an essay on patriotism for a school prize, and he was tired and sullen.

"Oh! Leslie, Leslie, do come out and look at the moon!"

"I don't want to see the moon. I'm sick of the sound of it. People talk of nothing else."

"Leslie, don't be grumpy. Everything is going to be all right. The Government have bought father's idea, and they are going to give him the use of a laboratory and a salary."

"He won't stick to it," he growled, blinking up at the moon. "You know he won't. He likes sitting in a chair in slippers and dressing-gown, smoking a pipe and feeling ill-used."

"Don't be bitter, Leslie. It is recognition he has always wanted. Now he has got it."

"People are very generous with Government money; there's nothing in that. I've been writing about that. People think the Government is something different from themselves. They can't see that Government money comes out of their own pockets."

"You *are* bitter, Leslie. People can't help themselves. When I saw Mr. Smart the other day he said he was rather anxious about you because you had been reading Dostoevsky."

"Oh!"

"Well, it isn't good for you. English people don't get into epileptic rages."

"I wish to God they did, then something would happen."

"But something has happened, Leslie. Something wonderful has happened."

"It won't make any difference. It won't alter Dad, or me, or you, or Uncle Henry sitting in his office. . . ."

He was terrible when he was in these moods. Ruth felt immensely sorry for him. She put her arm round him and stood with him in the moonlight, under the acacia-tree which adorned their front garden, and tried to soothe him.

"There *are* good people in the world, Leslie. Sir Seymour wants me to take you to see him."

He was pleased, but could not shake off his mood, and he said:

"I wish to God you wouldn't talk about me to strangers, Ruth. . . . You're always doing it, and I have to live up or down to the nonsense you tell them."

She told him about Trenham's house, and at last he said grudgingly:

"He must be a decent old card."

"Oh! he is. He gave me his letter to Dad opened, so that I could read it. I've closed it so that Dad can have the pleasure of telling us, and then I shall tell him that I'm leaving the City and going in to Sir Seymour's Ministry. . . . We're rich, Leslie, we're rich!"

Leslie scowled up at the moon. He had been reading *The Brothers Karamazov* and wanted to be like Alyosha, except in the moments when he thought himself the embodiment of all evil, and decided that he was irrevocably Smeadyrkov.

Ruth laughed at him.

"Isn't it wonderful? . . . I should just love to walk in and tell Uncle Henry what I thought of him."

"Leave that to me," said Leslie. "I shall unbutton his waistcoat, pull out his shirt, shave off one of his whiskers, and turn him loose in the City with a placard

on his back: 'This is what I get for two hundred a year given to my nephews and nieces.' And on his front I shall have another placard: 'Charity is a boomerang.'"

"Ssh!" said Ruth. "He thought he was being kind."

Their father had heard their voices, and had come to the top of the stairs and called:

"Ruth! Ruth! Is that you?"

She went up to him and gave him Trenham's letter. His mind could not take it in. His hand trembled, he clutched the letter to his bosom, and laughing and crying he said in a quavering and silly voice:

"Ruth, Ruth. It's come. My fortune is made. Oh! Ruth. If only your mother were alive she would take back some of her words. . . . Ruth, you must leave your office at once. We will pay for the repairs to the house and we will move at once. . . . I never did care for Highgate, though the air is good. I have a fancy for the neighbourhood of Baker Street. It is select without being pretentious or genteel. And, Ruth dear, I . . . I must have some new clothes. Ah! Ha! Ah! Ha! I always knew I should show the Hobdays that . . . that . . . Oh! well it doesn't matter. . . . I wish we had a bottle of port in the house. . . . Your uncle used to send us some port every year until your mother said something about your aunt. It was perfectly true, of course, but most unfortunate. . . . Three hundred pounds, my dear. . . . The idea . . . The mere idea is worth three hundred pounds to the Government. Oh! I wish we had a bottle of port in the house!"

X

SOPHINA

A FEW weeks later saw both Charles Hobday and his daughter in the service of their country, Charles with a salary of £300 a year, Ruth receiving £2 17s. 6d. a week. This was a loss of five shillings a week to her, but it was more than compensated for in the gain of leaving the City, which had been for five years the scene of her captivity. That was over. The fatal spell which had descended upon her and her family was broken. Her father was alert, gay, sanguine. In the neighbourhood of Baker Street he had found the upper part of a big house, and into this the Hobdays moved. It was an ugly house, but it was roomy and had character and it was in London, so that a large part of the day was no longer spent in going to and from work.

At the Ministry Ruth was not immediately under Trenham, and she rarely saw him. When they met he gave her a friendly nod, and occasionally asked her if she liked her work. She was with girls who for the most part were working for the first time, having jumped at the chance of escaping from home. The great hotel in which they were housed glowed with a holiday atmosphere, and for a time Ruth was entirely happy. She needed a rest, time in which to recuperate, to look around her and make very sure that she really had escaped from the grinding monotonous anxiety. Her companions thought her "stand-offish," but she was only so absorbed in the release of her feelings that very often she did not hear them when they spoke to her. She was one of the very

few who knew anything about office organization, and she was in consequence kept hard at work. This also did not increase her popularity.

She was given as assistant a little Jewish girl who was strange and exotic among all the rest. Her name was Sophina Lipinsky, though everybody called her Sophina at once because she was extraneous to their atmosphere, and rather like a cat that had strayed in, and as a stray cat makes friends by accepting milk, so Sophina ingratiated herself by taking tea at all hours with whoever happened to be making it at the moment. She became attached to Ruth, singled her out, again like a stray cat, as the person, if any, to whom she belonged, and it was not long before she confided her story. Ruth hardly listened at first, but Sophina's persistence and the events of her story stirred in Ruth an element in her being that had lain dormant.

Sophina told her that she came of poor East End parents, and in her neighbourhood there were several young Jews who had revolted against the poverty of their surroundings and against the hard money-grubbing with which their parents strove to escape from it, and they had discovered Art. In the West End there were people who had become rich through Art, and they were very important. Her friends then began to paint pictures and write poems, and one or two of them managed to establish connections with the artists in the West End, and with rich people who cared for Art. A few of them even made a little money, and among these was Finberg, a Pole from Warsaw, who was not like the others because his people were political refugees and had lived in France, so that he could read French and knew a little about books. He was very handsome and made friends quickly. When he had made a few pounds he published a little book of his poems and sent them to the papers and to one or two well-known writing men. The reviews were favourable, and he judged it time to break away from the East End circle and to go up to the West End to make his fortune. He had made love to Sophina, and she insisted on going

with him because she knew that if he went alone he would forget her. He was full of confidence, and also he loved her. And together they moved to one room in Gray's Inn Road. They had more excitement than money but that did not matter so long as they were together. Finberg was a Revolutionary, and did not believe in marriage. They had a child and managed to keep it alive, but Finberg was worried. His manuscripts kept returning and he took to going to cafés, where artists and writers met, and then the war broke out and, when everybody had to go, Finberg wouldn't because he was a Revolutionary, and because his people had had trouble in France, and he lost a lot of his friends. No one knew how he managed to keep out of the Army, but he did. . . . Sometimes he disappeared for weeks and left her alone to face it out. Then he came back and she was happy again, but at last he went away altogether, and she thought for a long time that he was in the Army, until she met him one day in the street, well-dressed and looking well-fed, and he pretended to be absorbed in a newspaper, though she knew perfectly well that he had seen her. . . . She did nothing, she could not move. It was in Piccadilly Circus; she remembered standing there looking down at the old woman selling flowers and thinking that she would one day be among them. . . . Her people were strict Jews and would have nothing to do with her, and she did not know where to turn, but a lady who had been kind to both her and Finberg sent her to learn shorthand and typing, and she had found work for her at the Ministry.

The story offended and yet fascinated Ruth. It had in it such a stink of the Ghetto and the streets that she was horrified. She liked, yet did not altogether trust, Sophina, of whom she felt that she told her story too glibly. It had been told too often to be convincing any longer. It had lost its authenticity.

"Where do you live now?" Ruth asked her.

"Oh, I live in some rooms near Mecklenburgh Square."

"And the baby?"

"Oh! some kind friends have taken care of it. Such kind people. They said children ought not to be brought up in London."

Ruth smiled. A million or more babies lived in London. How was Sophina's different that it should be removed? Such gipsy carelessness rather affronted her when she remembered all her own efforts to preserve her brothers and sisters. . . . But to Sophina it seemed, apparently, the most natural thing in the world that, having lost Finberg, she should also lose his child. She spoke of it as something pathetically romantic in the past which accounted for and justified herself. She was lazy and apt to be pert, because she was intelligent and critical, and therefore did not take the Ministry altogether seriously, and she was so careless that she would have been sent away had not Ruth intervened and promised to teach her the method necessary for office work. She did not object to Sophina being flung out on the world, but she could not bear the idea of her sponging, as she knew she would. . . . She guessed that Sophina's baby had been adopted by some woman hungry for a child, and she knew that in a difficulty Sophina, without the slightest compunction, would resort to blackmail; and yet she liked Sophina, because she was alive, with that assertive slippery vitality peculiar to the Jews. Most of the other girls were alike each other as the blouses they bought in Oxford Street or the shoes they purchased at one or other of the multiple shops. They read, talked, laughed, flirted, spent money in order to avoid thinking, but Sophina could and did think, and she was calculatingly contemptuous. Often Ruth felt that Sophina knew more about her than she did herself, and she was a little afraid of her.

One thing Sophina knew which Ruth never suspected, and this was that she had a friend in high places who saw to it that her promotion was rapid. Therefore Sophina clung to Ruth, and was promoted with her. . . . It was not long before Ruth, with Sophina attached, was working in a room with two other girls who were too busy and

too intent on their advancement to pay much attention to the new-comers. Ruth received her instructions direct from one of Sir Seymour's secretaries, and her work and that of the others did not overlap.

This secretary was a young gentleman of culture who took a violent interest in Sophina as soon as he heard she was a Russian, for he believed Russian literature to be superior to all others, and he liked to talk about it. More than once he protested that Russian defeats did not matter because, after all, Dostoievsky and Tolstoi had conquered Europe. . . . Now Sophina could not speak a word of Russian, but she concealed that fact, and soon the secretary began to treat her as the priestess of his oracle, and she played the rôle admirably. . . . He asked her out to dinner and, though he knew that Russians are unconventional, he could not un-English himself to take her out alone, and also invited Ruth, of whom he was just a little afraid. She saw that Sophina wanted her to go, and good-naturedly accepted. To make a *parti carré* the young gentleman, Carline, asked his friend and patron, Mr. Cherryman, who happened not to be dining out that evening, to meet his marvellous Russian.

They were at a polite restaurant in a cellar just off Regent Street. It was Ruth's first excursion into West End life, but to Sophina, of course, it was as familiar as water to a duck. She had a special manner, a hauteur, an air of being able to spend unlimited money, a contemptuous tolerance of this particular restaurant as not being quite as good as those which it was her habit to frequent. She was not singular in this. The same attitude was in both Carline and Cherryman, whose presence in the eyes of the head waiter made the party worthy of honour, and to be admitted to the secrets of the kitchen and the cellar. . . . The conversation was all of things Russian—Russian music, ballet, novels, philosophy, religion, Ikons, Byzantine art, folk-songs, caviare, the okhrana, Azev, Bourtzev, Solovyov and many other evs and ovs, and Sophina kept the ball rolling marvellously. There was nothing Russian

that she did not know, and she gave a glowing description of life in Russia, in happy oblivion that her story gave the lie to that which she had told to Ruth.

"Ah!" said Cherryman, after the enthusiasm for Russia had frothed and fumed until dinner was nearly over. "That was true enough before the war, but we have altered all that. England has become a nest of singing birds, as she was in the days of Elizabeth." And he produced a copy of Hardman's poems, and with a bow presented it to Ruth with an inscription.

She smiled and thanked him, and opened the book. It was dedicated "To my friends James Peto and Trevor Mathew." . . . She attached no importance to the names, but the book was somehow friendly. It was a relief after Carline's limpid enthusiasm and Sophina's unblushing lies, and she began to like Cherryman a little more. He had worried and annoyed her with his pestering questions with which he sought to establish her social connections, though he was perfectly satisfied as soon as he had pinned her down to kinship with the firm of Hobday, Treves and Treves. . . . A niece of Henry Hobday! Ah! Fine old man. Solicitor of the old school. Great figure at the Law Society: ought to have been knighted, but above that sort of thing. . . .

"A bit of a change for you doing your bit in a Ministry, eh, Miss Hobday?"

Ruth admitted smilingly that it was a great change.

Over coffee Cherryman read her some of Hardman's poems in a peculiar little chanting voice so that she could hardly hear a word and had to fall back on watching him lash himself into an ecstasy, so that one big vein stood out on his round, shiny forehead, and his eyelids became greasy with emotion. He closed the book reverently and said in a husky whisper:

"He died at Suvla Bay. . . . The most charming boy. No one could resist him. No one did resist him. . . . He lived with these two friends of his and every one adored them. I assure you, Miss Hobday—it may sound ridi-

culous to you—but they were like three lovely *débutantes* in the old days. You know, they went everywhere; everybody talked about them; artists drew their portraits. And they were so intellectual, I assure you. They brought the very flower of the atmosphere of Cambridge into London. . . . At the opera, at the Russian ballet—ah! the Russian ballet!—at the Savoy, at Downing Street, wherever you went, they were there. And unspoiled! Absolutely unspoiled! . . . It was I who discovered that Hardman was a poet. He was indifferent about it at first, but when a few of his verses had been printed he gathered confidence, and the war—the war gave him his inspiration. That is our answer to Carline's Russians, and we can look Europe in the face!"

After this eloquence Mr. Cherryman ordered a liqueur and suggested that the party should adjourn to his rooms as the cafés had become intolerable since the war.

"Do you know a poet called Finberg?" asked Sophina, glancing savagely across at Mr. Cherryman.

"Finberg. . . . Oh, yes." Mr. Cherryman gulped uneasily and said in a quavery tone: "He is—he is—against the war."

"He isn't against anything," sneered Sophina. "He is for Finberg, and nothing else. Says he's a Russian, but he's an East End Jew."

She had drunk a good deal of wine, and she was annoyed with Mr. Cherryman for diverting attention from herself.

"I used to know him," she continued. "Is he any good as a poet?"

"I—er—I had hopes of him before the war," said Mr. Cherryman, "but that has destroyed so many of our hopes."

Sophina gave a snarl of satisfaction. She understood that Finberg was not really any good, that he had spoiled his chance and that he had left her for a shadowy ambition. She could not resist giving a triumphant cruel laugh, and then she returned to her new game of charming Carline,

who had begun to bask in the warmth of her Russian temperament.

The party had become uncongenial to Ruth, and she took refuge in the book Mr. Cherryman had given her. On the whole she disliked him as she disliked the head waiter, because of a certain cadging familiarity in his manner. Of the two, though he was the more foolish, she preferred Carline. As for Sophina, she wanted to shake her for being so unscrupulous, although she could not help being amused by the depth of Carline's infatuation when she heard him almost whispering to her that he could not call her Miss Lipinsky, but wished to do as they did in Russia and to call her by her name and her father's name—Sophina Solomonovna Finotchka. . . . And Sophina rose to it and actually began to talk with a slight foreign accent, which she could easily achieve by exaggerating her natural and racial guttural tones. . . . Carline had never spent such a delightful evening. He felt that he was living in a Russian novel. If only—ah! if only he could do something unexpected, but cudgel his brains as he might he could think of nothing, and much as he might crave a Russian intimacy with Sophina Solomonovna he could not help being English and polite to her, flattered, moved and shaken though he was by her bold black eyes. He often looked uneasily across at Ruth, thinking: "Ah! these English women! how cold they are! How indifferent! How sluggish! How without depth and ability to see beyond their domestic purposes!" And he, too, under Sophina's influence began to think, though not to speak, with a foreign accent, and he included in his already excessive gestures a hearty Russian shrug.

The evening ended as Cherryman desired, at his rooms in the Temple. Ruth was reluctant to go, but Sophina wished to complete the conquest of Carline, and Cherryman was anxious to show his pictures and his first editions and his trophies from the battlefields—a shell, a Pickelhaube, a piece of a German aeroplane, a charred piece of wood which he said came from the first Zeppelin brought down

in flames. . . . The memory of that made Ruth go pale. She had seen the great mass of flame descending from the sky and had thought with horror of the men destroyed in it, though an even deeper horror that pierced to the very bottom of her soul came with the terrible shout of triumph that arose from London. . . . She looked aghast at Cherryman as he caressed his trophy in his fat hands.

"I motored out with Lady Manton," he said. "She rang me up."

And he went prattling on in his bland innocence, which made it impossible for Ruth to stay. She could not. The memory of that terrible shout was too much for her. At the time it had made her hide herself away and weep in the dark, but she had not been able to understand, and now in a dim way her faculties had begun to work upon her experiences, to thread them together and roughly to sift and sort out those that were not yet shapely enough to be threaded. . . . Now that her troubles were settled, her energy was turned in upon herself, and there she found much that baffled, much that troubled and disconcerted her, because it was so unexpected. . . . Sophina was putting the finishing touches to her flirtation with Carline; Cherryman had not the least idea of the commotion in Ruth, and he was annoyed when she left him abruptly, walked up to Sophina and said:

"Sophina, I really must ask you to go now. . . . We ought not to have come. I blame myself."

"Oh, I say, Miss Hobday!" said Carline. "I've had such a splendid time."

Sophina knew that it would not do to offend Ruth, and she was the only one to recognize that Ruth was upset. She could not imagine about what, and thought that perhaps she had given offence with her extravagance, which had carried her so far as she cared to go—for the present.

"It is pretty late!" she said.

"In Russia," exclaimed Carline, "there isn't such a word!"

"There used not to be such a word in a Government Office," said Cherryman. "But all that is changing. . . . It has been a delightful evening . . . Delightful! Don't forget your book, Miss Hobday. . . . How charming this new freedom is. . . . One felt it coming before the war, and then it looked as though it had been snuffed out. But now it looks as though the right people would be able to do as they like."

Ruth felt very decidedly that Cherryman and Carline were the wrong people for her, though in some odd way Sophina was right. Perhaps that was only because Sophina had adopted her.

Cherryman was still talking:

"It is delightful, the new social atmosphere in the Ministries. We are all such friends, and we have the satisfaction of easily playing our part in something big."

The "easily" was so admirably inappropriate that Ruth forgave him. There was no great harm in him. He believed that Life was pleasant. For him the sun shone all day long. It rose at precisely the same hour every morning, suffused the world with a delicate rose-pink, and set at the same hour every evening. He saw everything through this pink haze, and Ruth, on the whole, found him soothing. He was reluctant to let her go. The nearest approach to grief he had ever felt was at the break-up of a charming party, and for him it was clear that the war had become a charming party, and he looked forward to its breaking up with dread because—who knows?—he might find himself alone.

Ruth was astonished at the new thoughts stirring in her mind and at her new power of appreciating persons. It had begun after her dinner with Trenham, which remained for her a touchstone, the one outstanding event of her life. It had made her determined not to drift, had aroused her will only to force on her attention the fact that in war-time a will was most unusual and therefore to be disapproved. Sophina, Carline, and Cherryman were perfect for war-time: all will-less drifters with just enough

energy to steer them out of danger. To be irritated by them was to take them too seriously, but she could not help contrasting Cherryman's room with Trenham's house in North Street. The one was a litter of objects collected for the sake of collecting, the other was arranged to satisfy a taste.

"I hope you will come again, Miss Hobday," said Cherryman.

She thought she would not, but did not say so.

"Come, Sophina."

Sophina lagged in subtly disturbing conversation with Carline.

"You Russians make us look like children."

And he asked her for her address and wrote it down.

They were escorted to the great gate of the Temple, and as the door closed behind them Sophina said:

"I did have him on, didn't I? He asked me if I would teach him Russian, and I said I would. . . . My mother remembers a little Polish, but that's all. What shall I do?"

"Tell him the truth, if you've any regard for him," said Ruth. "I think he is at heart a nice, simple fellow."

"I know their sort," said Sophina savagely. "Finberg used to get money out of them."

Ruth was overcome with disgust. She could not bear cynicism, and there were times when Sophina seemed to be made of it.

Their ways parted. Ruth offered to see Sophina home, but the Jewess laughed.

"You see me home? Why, I'm as safe as you are. Any one would be afraid to speak to you, but they'd know they'd get as good as they gave from me. . . . 'Night.'"

She nodded and walked off briskly. She bore her troubles with a flaunting lightness which often distressed Ruth more than her friend's misfortunes themselves. Sophina was the first girl friend she had had since she left school, and it was through her that her emotions, nipped and starved, began painfully to creep into action once more.

The night was fine. She decided to walk home. The early deserted streets consoled her, for they were mysterious and beautiful. The night wind blew through them to freshen them, and with its coolness on her face Ruth was able to brush aside the evening's distasteful impressions and aching to dream of all that she had missed—home-life, the country, the sea and yellow sands, leisure to enjoy the song of the heart by day, the mystery of the stars by night, and the more mysterious stars that shone upon the sky of the inner world. . . . Life was altogether another thing by night. She had always been too driven to know that. The day's toil, the day's pleasures were all to fill the night with dreams. . . . And she was alone, so terribly alone. Her father, her brothers and sisters relied on her, but none of them knew her as she wished now to reveal herself—nothing very wonderful, nothing remarkable, but just a human being aching for contact with another. . . . The game of flirtation, at which Sophina had proved herself so expert, was altogether foreign to her, an art that she had neither desired nor acquired. Her calm grey eyes looked direct at everything they saw. They needed no artful movement to attract any gaze to them, but saw clearly what they wished to see and discarded what was displeasing to them.

XI

LESLIE

THOUGH Trenham took no further notice of her at the Ministry than to give her a friendly nod, he had not forgotten his promise. He visited her father at his laboratory and complimented him on his work, and having so far ingratiated himself he wrote and asked Ruth to bring her brother to lunch with him one Sunday at his house. . . . Leslie was shy and at first refused to go, but Ruth told him he could not be so rude to Sir Seymour, who had been so good to them all.

"I hate being helped," said Leslie.

"It wasn't a matter of helping," protested Ruth. "It was simply a matter of going to the one man who was honest enough to admit father's value."

"What about all the others?" asked Leslie.

"Oh, don't be so mulish! You will like Sir Seymour immensely. I should think he would be a hero to any boy. . . . He is wonderful in the Ministry. You can feel him there all the time. I always know when he is out. You are a very lucky boy to have the chance of meeting such a man."

Leslie saw that she was very eager for him to go, and to oblige he swallowed his objections and his shyness, brushed his hair, cleaned his teeth, and actually wore gloves. . . . Ruth wore a grey frock, very simple, and remembering her evening she pinned one pink rose in her bosom. It was done without coquetry, merely out of homage to the keen pleasure she had had. . . . It did not escape

Trenham's eyes as she and Leslie were shown into his little study where he had spent the morning reading.

He held Ruth's hand just a shade too long for Leslie, who thrust out his gloved paw brusquely, but relented at once as the great man gave him a friendly school-boyish grin, and further took no especial notice of him, listened respectfully when he talked, but never tried to draw him, and did not even ask him what he was going to be when he was a man. Leslie thawed and sat enjoying the amazingly new Ruth, who revealed herself in easy desultory conversation. Ordinarily her speech was a little jerky, and she usually talked as though she were thinking of something else, but her words flowed from her and sentences were coined in her mind before they left her lips. She and Trenham had great fun at the expense of Carline and the wonderful Russian girl he had discovered in the Ministry.

"What nonsense it all is," said Sir Seymour. "This excitement about the Russians. It simply means that our people haven't read our own eighteenth-century literature. The Russians have barbarized that."

Ruth thought: "This will be very good for Leslie."

"It reached the Russians through Dickens," continued their host. "And perhaps after all they will remind us of what we have forgotten. After the war we shall have to go back in literature and possibly in everything else to where we left off in the eighteenth century. . . . I'm glad you find time to read. There is no other escape at present."

Leslie was busy with the food, and Trenham in silence admired Ruth. She was so exactly right sitting there, as exactly wrong in the Ministry. . . . If he were a young man she would be the wife he would choose, strong, supple, steady, and quick to understand, one who could share everything and would scorn to be content with comfort as the good wife's just and due. That brought him to an unwelcome comparison, and he said:

"The Russians I dislike because they do not know how

to live. They tear themselves to shreds in attempting to expose their disabilities."

"And the English."

"Oh! we are not decadent yet. We have stopped thinking, that is all. It has preserved us in the past, and will do so again, because we can stop thinking indefinitely until it becomes safe again."

That tickled Leslie, for it reminded him of a master at school with whom he had conducted a feud over three terms.

"What's the joke?" asked Trenham, a little bewildered.

Leslie blushed to the roots of his hair, and he said:

"Nothing! Nothing!"

Trenham looked affectionately at the boy. He had Ruth's eyes, a good head, a rather absurd nose that had not yet decided on the shape it was going to take, and a very sensitive, touchingly young mouth. That again was like Ruth's, and Trenham looked from her brother to her and he decided that he must not see her again; certainly not alone: she was too like the lady of his dreams.

After lunch they walked in St. James's Park, where Trenham resented the temporary buildings which had been erected on the drained lake.

"I suppose some people get used to these things. I don't. Being a provincial I love my London and know it well. It offends me to see it given over to temporary purposes, and all this offends me too as being overdone. . . . And St. James's Park and the Mall. But nothing is sacred nowadays. Some one wants to make money, and memories must be smashed. Memory is life. . . . I think I should have been with Fox during the Napoleonic War. . . . We need a Fox now. Do you feel cut out for it, Leslie?"

"Me? . . . Well, I'm always on the unpopular side at school. All the boys are what their fathers are, but I——"

Trenham's eyes twinkled. He knew as Leslie did that

Charles Hobday was nothing. Ruth did not know, and he was glad of that bond between the boy and himself.

Out of sight of the temporary buildings there were still one or two corners of the Park that had retained their charm. To stand and gaze from under the green trees at the old houses in Queen Anne's Gate was to feel that life here had been lived undisturbed for a very long time, and that nothing could disturb it for it had been evolved, created and had attained immortality. It was as sweet and clear as a dream, and whirling round it, menacing it, but finding it unattainable, was life still in chaos, in process of evolution, rebellious because it must take shape according to the dream and not according to its crude desire.

Looking affectionately at Leslie, Trenham thought with relief that he was young enough with luck to escape the war. He would not be drawn into it; it would make no deep impression on him and he would be able to slip eagerly into the life cleared and freshened by it.

"When I was young," he said, "I used to come and look at those houses, and I made up my mind that I would live in one of them. North Street is not a bad shot at a fulfilled ambition."

And Leslie looked at the houses in Queen Anne's Gate and made up his mind that he would live in one of them some day with a valet and a spanking cook, and a little panelled study full of books. He would live alone, and his brothers and sisters should marry to supply him with nephews and nieces to whom he would be as jolly as Trenham had been to Ruth and himself.

"I'm jolly glad I brought my gloves," thought he.

"That's a good boy," said Trenham in a low voice. "We must steer him through."

She raised her eyes in a slow, happy smile. That he said "we" was the crown of her enjoyment of that day. To share hopes for Leslie brought to light the many sympathies they had in common.

"Oh, thank you," she murmured, and Trenham said:
"We must talk it over."

A squad of soldiers came swinging along Birdcage Walk from the barracks. They were raw troops in the stage of regarding themselves rather uneasily as a joke, and they were still too self-conscious to have learned to march. Ruth could not bear to look at them, and turned away, but Leslie stood staring wistfully at them. To him they represented something impenetrable, that sooner or later he would have to face, and he gazed at them fascinated until they had passed out of sight.

"One doesn't notice that any more," said Trenham.

"I do," she replied, and he knew that she was thinking of her brother.

As they walked slowly back she said:

"I have been reading Hardman's poems. They may have been true once, but I don't think they are true any longer. . . . How can that be? Isn't truth always the same?"

"Not a personal truth. . . . What he wrote may have been true for millions when he wrote, but that doesn't make it true for all time."

"I gave the book to Leslie. He simply couldn't read it. Could you, Leslie?"

"No."

"We have travelled far since Hardman. The youngsters aren't expected to have any feelings about it now. They simply have to go. School is finished and they go. . . . Delightfully easy for their parents, isn't it?"

"Don't!" said Ruth. "Don't!"

It was as though the marching soldiers had trampled her happiness underfoot, and she was anxious to escape. Therefore she refused Trenham's pressing invitation that they should return to tea.

In Whitehall, as they were walking towards the station, she became aware of some one desiring to attract her attention, and looking up she saw Mr. Cherryman, who, meeting her with Sir Seymour, was determined not to pass unnoticed.

With him was a young man whom she felt vaguely she had seen before.

It was Trevor Mathew, but he hardly noticed her, so irritated was he with his companion's persistence. So strong was the impression of having seen him before that involuntarily she turned and looked after him and Trenham, roused to jealousy, turned also. Mr. Cherryman raised his hat a good eighteen inches from his head and bowed as though he were hinged in the middle.

Leslie could not keep in a guffaw. He was a solemn boy, not often stirred to laughter, and when it happened to him he was overcome and had to fling himself into contortions.

"Leslie! Leslie!" cried Ruth.

"The boy's quite right," said Trenham. "It was funny, very funny. They *are* funny, these buffoons of London."

"It was he who gave me Hardman's poems," said Ruth, her eyes twinkling as she recovered from her annoyance.

"That makes it all the funnier," replied Trenham.

"Goodbye, sir," said Leslie as they parted, and with stiff formality he added, "Thank you for a very pleasant afternoon."

"Thank *you*, sir," answered Trenham with a grin.

In the train Leslie's tongue was loosened:

"I think he's a topping man. He likes you, Ruth. That's why I like him. He makes no bones about it. A swell like that might easily put on side, but he doesn't a bit. And he feels things, too. . . . I do hope he'll ask us again. By Jove, I'd work for a man like that. I'd know he wouldn't say anything was good unless it was jolly good. . . . Does he live all alone? . . . I shall live like that. . . ."

Leslie suddenly knit his brows as he thought of his father and Trenham having said he was good. . . . Perhaps he was. . . . But no, he couldn't be. Leslie knew his father too minutely.

"I say, Ruth," he said suddenly, "did Trenham know father long ago, or was it mother?"

"He worked with father a long time ago, before we were born."

Leslie whistled.

"I shouldn't have thought he was as old as that."

"He is younger than father," said Ruth.

It was much pleasanter to go back to the upper part in the neighbourhood of Baker Street than to the little house at Highgate, which had been exile. This was London. There was no abrupt change of atmosphere, no dwindling into a life that merely looked towards London. The Hobday furniture was almost at home in the big rooms, while there was space enough for the Paget-Sutton portraits to get away from it. They need no longer look down in such disdain, and indeed they seemed to have become once more their own wicked selves. It was Charles who called them wicked, a taunt he had invented to fling at his wife when she was scornful of the Hobdays.

Over tea Leslie chattered of his lunch with the great man who had become his hero, but Ruth complained of a headache and went up to her little room at the top of the house, from which over the roofs she could see the tree-tops of Regent's Park.

Out of that happiness remained two figures, Trenham and the young man whom she had met with Mr. Cherryman, and she was angry with herself because they stood between her and the new life that was slowly unfolding before her. Except for her fears for Leslie the din and bustle of the war were far behind her. She had accepted her place in its machinery, and, like every one else, had forgotten about it except as an increasing pressure which had become a part of her habitual existence. She had never sought relief in intellectual trickery, and she had no theories of emancipation, and viewed almost with horror the mannish young women with short hair, angular movements, and drawling voices who were beginning to appear both in and out of khaki. . . . But she was one who had always

seen clearly and definitely; it was necessary to her so to see, and now she was aware that her vision was beginning to be clouded, blurred, disturbed by mysterious movements in the depth of her being. She who for so long had stood alone was conscious that she could not continue to do so, that she had not the force, that indeed she was not alone, never alone, that another presence had become dear to her, that humanity was more than a crowd linked together by needs and habits, that she needed to enter into humanity and could only do so through the presence that had become dear to her. . . . Somehow all these dim emotions were associated with Sophina and the horrible life she had revealed of violent false emotions, hungry people cadging money, Jews, poets, women with painted faces and hard eyes. . . . All that had hurt and at the same time had stirred her until she knew that she could no longer be alone as she had been. There was no need for it any longer. Old habits were broken, and a new life had become possible. The change had been miraculous, and she wanted the miracle to continue.

Unconsciously she had always rebuffed and failed to understand the attentions of the youths and young men who had been attracted by her. There had been no time for them, and besides young men were, on the whole, very tiresome and callow. But now that there was no occasion for her habit of reserve shew as afraid that it would continue. She was uneasy, restless, perturbed, and she felt that so much had happened that nothing could happen again. Her heart fluttered in this new anxiety, and, raising her hand to it, she missed the pink rose she had pinned at her breast, and at once her heart was still as a stone. Something had happened, an event of real importance. She tried to cover it up by telling herself that she had dropped the rose, but she could not; she did not really desire to hide from the knowledge that Trenham had taken it—exactly when, she could not remember, but that he had done so she was certain. She had gladly marked his eyes falling on it, and more gladly still she remembered now

a moment of intimacy, almost of contact. . . . When? How? She could not remember. It was too painful for her to bear such recollection. . . .

He had liked Leslie, and would be a powerful friend to him. She was sure that Leslie had it in him to be a man of the kind she desired, and she knew that Trenham had made a deep impression on him, had stiffened him and given him the direction which from his school, where he learned with such fatal ease, he could not find. . . . At the end of the year Leslie would go to Westminster, and Ruth fell to dreaming as she gazed over the roofs to the tree-tops of Regent's Park, of Sir Seymour Trenham being kind to him and having him to his house, giving him the run of his books, and what was of more importance, his own mind.

Leslie was so elated by his lunch with the great man that he wanted to talk about it, and after tea he went up to his sister's room and knocked, received no reply, and went in to find her asleep at the open window with her head on her arm. He stood looking down at her, and he thought, to his surprise, that she looked very young. He had always thought of her as grown-up, a person in authority, endowed with almost infallible wisdom. That was because she gave orders, and was Ruth, the person to whom everything was referred. As he looked down at her he found himself wondering whether she was pretty or not. Her neck was beautiful, her hair rich and full of electric vitality, her skin soft and subtly pallid.

"Poor old Sis!" said Leslie, suddenly regarding himself as a man. "Poor old Sis!" and he stooped and kissed her.

Ruth opened her eyes slowly and happily, and seeing his hand near hers she clutched it and pressed it warmly.

"I was asleep," she said, with a smile, as she became aware that while she slept miraculously new and magnificent emotions and desires had welled up and had flooded her entire being. Had she been alone she would have wept in happy silence, but with Leslie present she could only clutch his hand and press it warmly, rejoicing that hence-

forth she could understand him physically and need not strain with her mind to comprehend the incomprehensible, the subtle delicate movement of a budding soul.

It was very quiet in the little street, and in the house, which was inhabited by two other obscure families. The quiet was good when so much was happening.

"I did like that man, Ruth," said Leslie. "And I liked his house and the way he walks and his clothes and his manner as he talks and moves. He doesn't seem a bit old, really. He doesn't treat you as if you were a rank outsider because you are young. He might have been in the same form as me. . . . I should think he knows a lot, too. I saw a lot of history books on his shelf and old maps, and there was a big parcel of new books in the hall. . . . Did you notice?"

Was there anything that she had not noticed?

"It must be you he likes, Ruth, or he'd have asked Dad to lunch."

Ruth's heart beat wildly, and she smiled at herself. "Be quiet! Be quiet!"

"He goes to see Dad at the laboratory."

"Oh, no. . . . I've just been talking to Dad about him, and Dad hates him. I think he's jealous and fancies he ought to be 'Sir,' and have letters after his name, and be bossing the whole war. Dad doesn't change."

"I'm sure you're wrong, Leslie. It is only Dad's way of talking. He had so many ideas that he thinks everybody ought to get away to make room for them. If Dad could have his way the world would be peopled with his ideas instead of human beings. . . ."

"Yes," said Leslie. "That's just the difference. Sir Seymour is so big he makes room for everybody, and one idea of his is worth a million of Dad's. It doesn't get in anybody's way. . . . I don't believe Dad knows that even his own children are alive. If a bomb dropped on us and wiped us out he would go on just the same. . . . We ought not to exist because we can't be solved by

chemistry, and he feels this so strongly that in fact we don't exist."

"Don't be bitter, Leslie!" said Ruth. He was always like that after he had made one of his periodic attempts to talk to his father. She used to try to argue with him, but now she understood that he was hurt through his passionate need for affection. . . . Like most families who have fallen below their traditional standard of comfort, the Charles Hobdays kept themselves aloof and it had been drilled into Leslie by his mother that he must not easily make friends, and what he was too proud to see outside he could not help every now and then trying to win at home.

"I'm not bitter," he grumbled, "only it is hard lines. I didn't choose my father, but he might at least be decent about it. Some chaps I know have awful trouble with their fathers because they are religious; but Dad isn't that. They do know what they're up against, but with Dad there's nothing, nothing at all. He never has an answer in an argument. He just talks as if you weren't there. He's . . . he's like a woman."

Ruth could not help laughing:

"That isn't a woman's trick, Leslie."

"Oh, yes, it is. I've heard fellows arguing with their mothers. . . . It's rotten luck. I might have had a father like Sir Seymour . . . I might have had——"

He seemed to recognize that he was being not a little ridiculous, for he stopped suddenly and knelt down and buried his face in Ruth's lap. Her eyes filled with tears as she stroked his head, tears of thankfulness that he could turn to her and was not like herself who had never turned to a soul, and had still burning in her the inevitable and needful tears of youth.

XII

THE SPIRIT OF LONDON

LIKE every other thinking person in England during this fatal time Seymour Trenham had recoiled in mind from the war. He could neither discover the real issues, nor face those set before him, nor come to any valid opinion upon them, nor find terms in which to discuss events as they occurred without nervous irritation. . . . Soon therefore events, huge as they were, became fictitious. It was impossible except by instinct to test the truth of any assertion that was made about them. Old conceptions of international conflicts had become inadequate, old national feelings were thin and vapourish compared with the facts upon which they were brought to bear, the steady drain of the young life of the country, the destruction of homes, manners, social habits, organization for production, the deluge of Government papers in hasty imitation of continental methods. . . . There was nothing for it but mechanically to continue his work, and to withdraw into himself and to discover and indulge those personal predilections which in his strenuous career had been passed by and left unsatisfied. It was a painful process, for he had never before explored beneath the surface of life, but gradually he found that what lay beneath the surface was infinitely more exciting than anything that occurred externally. There was a meaning in it, a purpose, a logic, and the clearer this perception became the more difficult he found it to reconcile his vision with what was presented to his eyes in every day existence and indeed with what had been in his life. He was accustomed to vast machinery

and to tremendous mechanical organization, but until he came to London he had not understood to what an extent it dominated humanity. . . . During the early days of his work at the Ministry he had spent much time in gleefully exploring London, and comparing it with the city of his youth, and one day in a Tube train, oppressed by the monotony of the expression on the faces of the people, he had had a kind of vision of their appearing in uniform, bright and a little fantastic, and now that vision was being fulfilled, only the uniforms were not gay but drab, khaki and grey and dull blue. It was right that people who wore the same expression should wear the same dress, but the result rather horrified him and drove him deeper and deeper into his new habit of self-exploration, which left him profoundly dissatisfied. He had this in common with the mass of people, that he had allowed himself to be swept along by organization. The result had been extremely profitable to himself in a material sense, but it had left him without any sense of internal continuity. His ambition was satisfied, but his most personal desire was not. He had done what was wanted by the organization to which he belonged, and no more. True, what he had done had been vital to that organization and he had been richly rewarded, but there it ended. He could spend money; he could work in his own time: and until now he had been content and proud of himself.

Nothing had ever troubled him greatly: nothing and no one had stood in his way for long. And then, after his transfer to London he had begun to question it all. . . . Perhaps it was only the difference in the people among whom he moved, among whom commercial values were complicated by social considerations. No; there was nothing very much in that. He was easily a social success, and had no difficulty in assimilating current ideas and jargon, though it took him some time to recover from his bewilderment at finding the London of his youth so completely disappeared. That had been a London of hansom cabs, really fashionable people who lived an enchanted

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life entirely apart, noisy thoroughfares, peaceful streets and squares, a confident respectability splashed with rowdiness. Now the respectability had disappeared; barriers between classes had been broken down and London had no character, no distinction. Bond Street and Regent Street had become like other market-places of blatant competition. There were no shops left which composedly supplied quality for quality, none that the average man would be afraid to enter. Similarly there were no houses which had an atmosphere so that a man's breeding was instantly revealed in it, and even politics were now conducted in the language of the market-place.

"There is nothing left," thought Trenham, "absolutely nothing left."

He had always lived in the North with the dream of London in his heart. That was perfectly clear to him now, though in all those years he had hardly been conscious of it, and now he had to face the cruel fact that the London of his dreams had been a thing so pretentious that it could not weather the storm: it had been a leaking hulk, which, drifting away in fair weather had sunk on the first stirring of the waters. . . . Coming up, eager and sanguine, to the London of his dreams he had found it gone, and at first told himself that it had never existed except in his own imagination. The disappointment was bitter because he knew that he had always worked for it, for that and for nothing else. England, Great Britain, the British Empire had always meant to him, London, to sustain whose life the world had been justifiably ransacked. . . . But who could justify the new London? He tried loyally to do so, but could not: a city hypnotized by its newspapers, for whom the world was simply a place of commercial competition, which at last had become so bitter that the nations had fallen upon each other like a pack of hungry dogs nosing after a bone. . . . That was the world as Trenham saw it and as he accepted it. There was nothing to be said, nothing to be thought about it. Human life had become of no value, but there must be somewhere

in humanity hopes and desires that could make it struggle on when outwardly there was no satisfaction to be found.

It was then that he plunged beneath the surface and began to live a strangely double life, one of intense excitement, as he discovered all that he had been beneath his strenuous and successful activity, the other of mechanical and monotonous boredom in which without effort he could put forth the skill and knowledge which were demanded of him. His life at home seemed as mechanical and without interest; he wrote regularly to his wife without saying anything of what was in his mind. It had never been his habit to do so. His marriage had been a success. He and his wife had fallen into their places in their household when they existed much as the servants did to fulfil their functions in it. . . . But here in London he was reluctant to think of these things. They were as much a part of him as his house or his watch-chain. He had acquired them, and they were his.

But were they? That was the question that plagued him more and more, especially after Ruth's visit and their dinner together and the lunch with Leslie, when, as she passed him in the narrow hall, he stole the pink rose from her bosom. . . . Were they his? Were they part of him? Were they possessed? . . . This little house in North Street was his, although he did not own it, the pink rose was his, although he had stolen it. Their significance was alive in him, affecting every breath he drew, and they made him feel sure again that his dreams after all had been true, that beneath the pretentious London which had been destroyed was another which was indestructible. It lived in this little house. It lived in the pink rose which he carried in his pocket-book. It lived in Ruth.

He could not long disguise from himself the fact that nothing else mattered. This was true. What was happening in the world was the confusion of many lies. He was working in that confusion, helping perhaps to produce order out of it, and so was Ruth, but that did not alter the fact of the truth they shared. They had nothing to

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do with it. When it had passed over they and their truth would be left untouched.

He approached her through Leslie, for whom he had conceived a warm affection, not only because he was Ruth's brother, but because he found that Leslie also lived beneath the surface of life, and was aware of its movements before they were expressed in utterance or in events. And in Leslie there was so much of Ruth, a wonderful purity, an astonishing knowledge of and sympathy with women, to whom his attitude was one of tender chivalry. Trenham discovered this one day when he took Leslie to a munition factory just outside London. A pretty, pale girl was pushing a trolley between one machine and another. Almost imperceptibly she kept trying to stop, but then forced herself to go on because the machine-minders at either end depended on her. Leslie noticed it at once, and went and pushed her trolley and gave her the three minutes' rest which made all the difference to her. It was only after Leslie had acted that Trenham noticed the girl's need. He was greatly disturbed, for the little scene roused in him a faculty that he had never used, instinctive perception. . . .

Ruth avoided him for some time. It was enough for her to hear about him from Leslie, who was full of admiration for that of which Trenham was already almost contemptuously weary, his ability and power. They had never won him anything that was worth having. The good things, the desirable things, were those which Ruth and Leslie acquired so easily—by understanding, by readiness with unobtrusive help. Both of them gave it to himself in abundance, though of course never in material shape. They could both hear the meaning behind his words, and soon when a day passed without his having seen one or other of them he felt lost and empty, and he arranged to be more directly in contact with Ruth at the Ministry. He moved her into the room next his own—an enormous board-room with a vast table round which were more than twenty chairs—and she brought Sophina with her.

Sophina became steadily more Russian as Carline grew more ardent, and she developed extraordinary tricks and mannerisms, though fortunately the effect of her finding a purpose was to brace her up and make her more efficient. Carline was rich: the prize was worth the effort. Also her quick eyes missed very little, and she was aware of the way things were tending with Ruth and Trenham, and she thought that if Ruth prospered she would have her share in it.

There were always flowers for Ruth on her desk. If it was raining there was always a taxi to take her home. Carline would bring her a parcel of books for Leslie on those occasions, so that she could not possibly have walked with them to the station. Trenham frequently asked Carline and Ruth to dinner with him, and at last Sophina, discovering this, made Carline take her out one night when dinner had been arranged, and he telephoned from a restaurant in Jermyn Street to say that he was unwell and could not come.

Ruth had already arrived in North Street; she was wearing a new green frock, very simply made, and flowers that had been on her desk fresh that morning. . . . There had been terrible news from the front. The streets were deserted. It was raining. . . . It was a wonderful relief to go to the little house in North Street and to shut out the world with the thick brocade curtains. She was a little early. Trenham came down jubilant with the news that Carline could not come.

"I'm glad," he said. "We never forget the Ministry when he is here. We talk of nothing else. . . . Bad news to-night. It is very horrible."

"Don't talk of it," said Ruth. "I was feeling so safe here."

He was exalted to-night, and she had never seen him so confident and so completely at his ease. They talked little at dinner, so engrossed were they in seeking comfort in each other's presence. Their eyes did not meet, for both looked round the room, both remembering the occasion

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on which they had enjoyed each other's company there ; and she was suddenly uneasy at the thought of having allowed herself to owe so much to him. He felt that in her at once, and said :

" Please, please don't be unhappy even for a second."

She was so astonished that she looked up and smiled, and their eyes met, and he was at once serious, almost stern as in his heart and mind there throbbed the knowledge of his love for her. They had shut out the world. He had lived for months now beneath the surface of his life, exploring, digging, and there had come welling up this love. She, too, had hardly begun to live outside her own thoughts and she had no defences ; she had no experience, no acquired skill in handling small emotions that she could apply to great. . . . She owed him everything. That was how her feeling expressed itself, and she needed no words from him to tell him that he loved her. He and she had always understood each other best without words.

From sternness his expression melted into tender confidence.

" I feel so sure that it is you," he said. " You couldn't lie as women do. . . . You would wait for ever until the one you really needed came, and then you would not wait."

Her left hand began to tremble in her lap. She looked down at it and wondered at it, so unaccountably trembling. It gave her an odd pleasure to watch it, a thing out of control, belonging to herself who had been so completely disciplined that no unruly thought or feeling ever dared to rear its head. And she was not afraid, not afraid, not afraid. . . . She wanted to laugh at herself, but suppressed it for the pleasure of suppressing it, just to show that she could do it.

After dinner in the study she sat on the sofa, and he read to her Wordsworth and Keats. Half-way through the *Belle Dame Sans Merci* he shut the book and threw it down. He was not a yard away from her. Without

turning he put out his hand and gripped her arm, and said :

"We're pretending. Don't let us pretend any more."

"No," she said, looking down at his strong hand. She placed her hand on it, only just touching it.

"You are mine," he said. "You are mine, my Ruth, as nothing else was ever mine."

They had shut out the world. They were beneath the surface of life. Between the beauty of what they shared and the fantastic horror of life as it had taken shape there was nothing in common.

"You are mine—my Ruth, mine, mine, mine."

XIII

PAYING THE PRICE

ALMOST every night at the Café Claribel, Trevor Mathew and Cora Dinmont were to be seen dining at the table in the top corner of the Café Saloon. They sat there from a quarter-past seven to half-past eight, and then went to a cinema until it closed with "God Save the King." They then returned either to his flat or hers, which were on the same landing in a block in Shaftesbury Avenue. . . . He was not unhappy. Neither was he happy. He had the satisfaction of knowing that, like his friends, he had accepted an altered and an anonymous existence in response to the pressure of events, and he had the interest of exploring for the first time the world of women, which is not without its educational importance. . . . After a while he was astonished that he had ever idealized them or submitted to the prevalent notion that they were somehow mysterious. Cora was not essentially different from himself, except that she had no intelligence, but before very long he was forced to admit that this was not a profound difference either. She did not think, but she was more practically selective than himself, and without agonizing or racking her brains she had come to much the same conclusion about the war as he had himself, namely, that it could not absorb the whole of humanity, and that therefore things would somehow be all right. The war could never absorb either herself or Mr. Ysnaga, who was "a sight too clever," and she had lost her professional interest in soldiers and with it her horror of their hysteria. . . . She was frenziedly in love with Trevor, and endeavoured

with her jealousy completely to isolate him. This was easy, because the war had snapped many of his ties in London, most of them had been through Hardman, and without his friend he did not care to hold them, especially after Cherryman had created an almost unrecognizable Hardman for the public. There were times when he wished to God Cora would leave him alone with Sydney, but he had to give up all hope of that because she could not bear him even to nurse the dog. She wanted to be with him from moment to moment, and did not wish either of them to do or think anything apart from the other.

At first that had been a welcome rest, and he remained grateful to Cora, but her jealous suspicion at first irritated and at length frightened him. She would not even believe him when he told her that he had been at the office all day, and he had to give a minute description of his doings there. . . . Were there any women? Any typists? Any clients who came because he was so nice-looking? . . . She would not let him write letters, and often burned unopened letters from his home.

He could endure it because he had suffered so much. What he found it hard to bear was his longing that she should have suffered. But there was never a sign of that. Her enormous vitality had sent her crashing through life untouched. She had violent emotions, but only as a kettle has steam. They were often unpleasant while they lasted, but when they had gone she was blandly and innocently unconscious of them, and he could only laugh at her. Indeed, she was so portentous a joke that he could not but be fond of her, and he often used to chuckle as he thought that human beings are most adorable in their stupidity. . . . Cora was quite adorable, and he would have been perfectly happy if she had just let him adore her without her adoring him, but she turned it into a competition, and could not bear the idea of his winning the prize. . . . When things were difficult Trevor used to think: "Well, well . . . It is only for a year."

It was expensive, but he had his own money, and did not need to account to his father, and it was worth it because it was a complete escape from the war.

His new life, the holiday at the sea had made him so fit that Henry Hobday had insisted on his submitting to another medical examination. Cora wept and wailed when he told her, had visions of his going out to France and being sent back maimed, and then bullied, tortured, and worried him until he was more dead than alive. Her jealous instinct knew just how far she could go, and on the day appointed for his examination he had been in exactly the right condition to secure complete rejection. He felt wretched and really ill as he walked into Scotland Yard. The sergeant who took him to his undressing cell said :

"Feeling bad, sir. I don't think they'll keep *you* long. You're one of the lucky ones."

And when Trevor came out with his complete rejection, and tipped him, he said :

"Congratulations, sir; though there's worse than you been took."

What struck Trevor as very odd was that he was conscious of no sense of transition. The life he was leading and this were exactly on the same level of mindlessness, backed by all the force of an aboriginal brutal tradition. . . . He staggered out, very cold from exposure while waiting his turn, feeling as though he had bumped into something about as conscious of his existence as an express train. Being bullied by Cora and prodded by doctors seemed to be part of the same buffeting process directed upon him in a desperate attempt on the part of things in general to knock some sense into his foolish, inquiring head.

There was not much left of the Cambridge Trevor, still less of the Trevor who had shone for a brief year in the Hardman trio. He was really feeling shockingly ill when he felt a hand on his arm, and he faintly heard Cherryman's voice :

"Hello, Trevor, my dear. . . . What's the matter? You don't look very well."

"No," said Trevor. "I've been re-examined. I'm no good."

"Poor chap! poor chap!" said Cherryman. "I know it has been a terrible disappointment for you. Where are you living now?"

Trevor lied and gave an imaginary address, which Cherryman wrote down neatly in a little book.

"Do come and dine with me some day," he said. "Do you remember Carline? He has discovered a wonderful Russian girl in the Ministry and he often brings her. Great fun. The first thing she remembers is a pogrom. . . . You know, all the things you read about. By the way, aren't you in Hobdays? There's a friend of hers, a Miss Ruth Hobday, also in the Ministry. . . . A beauty, my dear. If it weren't for this beastly war, she'd be taken up. . . . But everybody is too sad now, or working too hard. We take on two hundred new people a week in our department now, but it only seems to make more work. . . . Why don't you come in?"

He looked with almost wistful pity at Trevor, who had become singular by not being in a Government department, and Trevor felt that he was going to be asked the question that had been on the hoardings, "What did you do in the Great War?"

Cherryman held out a stiff hand:

"Don't forget. . . . I'm still in the same old rooms."

Of course he was! It would take more than the formation of an army to shift Cherryman!

Trevor had enjoyed meeting him, and out of their meaningless conversation one name remained: Ruth Hobday, who was a beauty. A niece of old Henry's. Trevor had heard of the head of the firm's poor relations and the cracked inventor. This could not be one of them, surely. They lived in the suburbs, and even the clerks spoke disparagingly of Mr. Charles as a poor fool who had refused to join the firm.

"Ruth Hobday! Ruth Hobday!" thought Trevor, stamping the name in upon his mind. He did not know why, perhaps to reassure himself that the whole tribe of women was not contained in Cora Dinmont.

He regarded the meeting with Cherryman as a piece of good luck, such as one no longer expects in the world in its present condition. By all means he would go to his rooms and meet Carline and his Russian, and perhaps Ruth Hobday. . . . He started at the name, then knew and recognized that he was longing to meet a girl of his own standing, one who could give him a cool friendly smile, such as girls used to give in the old days before the war in that existence which was as far off as the Roman Empire. . . . Ancient History. . . . And he knew, too, in that moment that if the war went on much longer he would marry Cora out of sheer non-resistance, because she knew what she wanted and he did not. Everything that he had wanted had been swept away. . . . Dear God! it would be good to want something again, something personal. . . . One couldn't go on living merely on wanting something for millions and millions of people. Humanity was a nice thing to think about, but millions and millions of people were horrible, especially when they had forgotten all about humanity in their obsession with nationality. . . . And so, as a man picks up a shining pebble in the hope that it may be a precious stone, Trevor repeated the name: Ruth Hobday, and he wondered if it were she whom he had passed in the dark passage one day. It might be. He could not remember anything about her except that she was young, but the idea of youth was just the comfort that he needed, and his dazed thoughts began to turn to spring flowers, white clouds, and an apple-tree in blossom swaying above a quiet river. . . . Oh, yes, Cambridge—Grantchester—the orchard and the punts gliding by full of happy people going a-picnicking. How innocent that had all been! How could that life have grown into the monstrous mockery of existence that had taken possession of London and expelled from it youth

and charm, gaiety and eagerness? How could so sweet a river flow down into such a muddy stream? And how could he even now be going back to the glaring flat in Shaftesbury Avenue?

Yet he could not but go on. . . . Where else could he go? Peto had been taken down to Wales to spend the rest of his life staring out of one eye at the mountains. . . . After all, Cora was a good sort, and she was a decent creature. She acted when others chattered. That she was at present engaged in devouring him by inches did not matter. She was engaged and passionately, and this was as good a form of destruction as any other. It was not to her devouring him that he objected so much as to her having no other interest outside the process. . . . But he was very vague about all that. What was clear to him was that he could find no valid reason for not going back. If he had been a soldier of course it would have been very different. He could have done as he pleased then, but, being a civilian, he must remember that, after all, there *are* certain obligations.

His thoughts were more and more muddled as he ascended the stairs, until at last he sank into the mindlessness into which Cora had driven him.

She had heard him and opened her door as he was going into his own at which, on the inside, Sydney was scratching in frantic delight. Cora was as exuberant in her relief as the pup.

"They didn't take you?" she cried. "Oh! Thank God! Thank God!"

She rushed at him, flung her arms round his neck and dragged him into her own flat. Sydney followed, and was shortly evicted for his usual offence.

"I don't know what I should ha' done if they'd taken you. I'd ha' done something dreadful or gone into the Red Cross to nurse you if you'd been wounded. . . . But you look bad, Boy. Were they very hard on you? . . . I must feed you up and give you milk. Rum and milk's good stuff."

Trevor could hardly hear what she said. He was very nearly in a state of collapse, but she insisted on his making love to her. It was her only idea of happiness.

At last he said:

"I think I'm going to be ill . . . Somehow everything has been too much for me. Being left out of it is the worst thing that could happen to a man."

Cora blubbered.

"Oh! Don't say that! Don't say that!"

She was terrified by illness, did not know what to do with it, and in her heart despised and hated it.

He said:

"Perhaps I'd better go home——"

The bare idea stung her into a fury.

"No. No. No. You'll be all right, Boy. I'll look after you. But you mustn't be ill. Why should you be ill when we're so happy together?"

"It's a kind of sea-sickness," said Trevor. "Have you ever been on the river and got the wash of a steamer? . . . Well, it's like that. . . . We're in the wash of the war, and it's making us all seasick. Much better to be killed or wounded."

He was much more ill than he knew, and the next morning could not get up. Cora, in alarm, carried him over to his own flat and put him to bed, and telephoned for the doctor, a little French Jew with a strictly West End practice. He looked for the symptoms with which he was familiar, and not finding them was nonplussed. He knew nothing of the sickness of the soul, because he had long ago come to the conclusion that there was not such a thing. He regarded human beings as greedy animals who were at the mercy of their appetites and, like every other philosopher, found in the war the grand confirmation of his view. He decided that Trevor was suffering from the appetite which was his especial study, prescribed, gave orders as to diet, and said that there was nothing much that he could do. He had never seen such a complete collapse before. He shrugged his shoulders and told Cora that

the only thing was to keep the patient in bed until he wanted to get up—a malady of the will. The patient had better be left alone as much as possible, plenty of sleep—alone. . . . Cora was angry and affronted. When the doctor had gone she turned to Trevor and told him that there was nothing really wrong with him. . . . He smiled, but did not reply. He could not. Though he heard her she seemed to be thousands of leagues away. His head ached and his mouth was dry, and his eyes burned in their sockets. The thoughts that whizzed through his mind were such that no one could possibly have understood them, no one. They were new thoughts that were related to nothing in the world as it was or as it had been, but to the world as it was going to be. . . . It was as though he had been turned upside down so that the deepest thoughts and feelings in him came uppermost and moved most easily while obvious and superficial ideas had the most bitter difficulty in emerging at all. He did not want to eat or drink or sleep. He never moved, but lay still at the mercy of this terrible inward activity.

Cora could only weep when she spoke to him, and did not answer, and she had frightful visions of his going mad, falling upon her, attacking her, killing her. . . . But she would rather have that than let him go. She telephoned to the office to say that he was unwell, filled his room with flowers, slept on the sofa at the foot of his bed, and kept Sydney away from him because the dog was the only creature he recognized and she could not bear to see his thin hand reaching out for it.

This went on for ten days, at the end of which she was pulled up sharp by her maid, who, missing the tips which Trevor gave her constantly, demanded her wages. Cora then found that she had no money, not a shilling. She had spent all her savings—God knows on what—and she had pawned or sold her jewellery. She drew out a cheque from Trevor's book and held his hand while he signed it, but the Bank returned it marked "R.D.," and she was so disappointed and amazed that she had not wit enough

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to go to the Bank, explain, and ask them to confirm her statement. . . . And she was getting sick of the long silence. It was telling on her nerves. . . . To have a maid, a good cook and housekeeper like Estelle was necessary to her status. To let her go was to begin to sink. When Trevor got well he would never stand her working with her own hands, because he was a gentleman. That was unthinkable. She made Estelle look out one of her old dresses, remodel it, and give it the fashionable tone, and went to the Café Claribel. Trevor would never know. It would only be until he was well. . . . She had read in books that love was sacrifice. She would love him only the more. She could not possibly look after him and the two flats if Estelle went, and maids were very hard to find because they had all gone into munitions or had become the equal of their mistresses now that the Bishop of London had closed the Empire promenade and upset the old order of things. . . . She must look after him, and there was no other way but by this great sacrifice. To Cora it was a very solemn occasion. It was to her as though she were raising herself at one gesture to his level. . . . A blue dress, a large blue feather in her hat, a bunch of white flowers in her bosom—white for sacrifice!—she went to the Claribel. . . . Ah! The smell of the place was good, and it was good to be alone. But that she would not admit to herself. . . . What she took for an heroic desire for sacrifice was an acute nostalgia, a hunger to live again simply, unsocially, without emotion, or more than passing interest. For a moment she was angry with Trevor because he was so damned serious, more than a little she suspected him of malingering in order to keep her at a distance. . . . What a jolly tune the orchestra was playing! Some new piece perhaps. The Doré gargoyle of a *maitre d'hôtel* came up to her obsequiously, and said:

"Mr. Mathew is not here yet."

"I'm alone to-night, and I don't want to sit in the corner."

Some distance away in the middle of the saloon she saw

Mr. Ysnaga with another Jew, but she would take no notice of him. If he wanted her, let him come for her. . . . She was just moving to a table as two Belgian officers vacated it when Mr. Ysnaga came over to her.

"Hello, Cora! . . . All dressed up, eh? I'll stand you a dinner if you like. You're just the girl I want."

Automatically she gave him a sidelong look of innuendo.

"All right," she said. "You know I hate paying for myself."

"It's a bad sign when a lady does," said Mr. Ysnaga, with his oily eyes dancing to and fro in the Jewish substitute for a twinkle.

They reached his table, and Mr. Ysnaga said:

"You must let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Angel."

They had finished their champagne, but they ordered more, so that Cora knew they meant business. After Mr. Angel had volunteered the information that if the war went on for another two years he would be a millionaire, Mr. Ysnaga, who had ordered turbot, braised ham and crème caramel for Cora, came to the point, and said:

"Cora, we want a girl with a back. The public's got a taste for backs just now, and you've got the best back in London."

"Thanks awfully," said Cora. "But what's the game?"

"We're putting money into a show, and directly I saw you just now I knew you were just the girl. You've been on the stage, haven't you?"

"Once or twice to oblige friends. But I haven't a voice, and I can't dance for nuts."

"That doesn't matter. . . . That piece the band was just playing was out of a show of mine. It's made a lot of money. . . . There was a back in that, but not so good as yours. . . . You'd get good money, and I'll pay for good advertising. I was afraid you'd gone off on the marrying lay."

"Me? Whatever made you think that?"

"Well, you weren't keeping that youngster."

"I'm not here to talk about him, Jose."

She began to calculate. If she accepted the offer it would mean that she would have something to fall back on if she did not realize her ambition with Trevor, but, on the other hand, if she appeared on a music-hall stage and exhibited her back well powdered and decorated with stage-diamonds, her plans would be jeopardized, and she still wanted that big house with a red dining-room and a greenhouse outside the drawing-room.

Mr. Angel admired the way she ate. He liked a woman who enjoyed her food and understood its importance. He was a thick-set humble Jew who could hardly speak English. He was pathetically humble and childishly delighted with his success.

"You know, my tear," he said, "de Var Office owe me seventy thousand pound, and I go to the Var Office and a great general mit a red collar open de door to me, and say: 'Come in, Mr. Angel,' and he gif me a cigar and talk of de vedder, and I say I must haf moneys as credit is going schmal, and he goes on talking of de vedder and gifs me out of his own head anudder order for twenty thousand pound. . . ."

The figures were as intoxicating as wine to Cora, though she knew there was no hope of getting a penny more than she was actually worth out of these Jews. Still, to be dining with so much money was an exhilaration.

"Are you going to take my back on trust from Mr. Ysnaga?" asked Cora, as the wine and the money went to her head.

"I take nothing on trust," said Mr. Angel. "Not even Government orders. De Government is vunderful. It has pay me already twice for vat it does not owe me, but vat it owe me it pays me mit talk about de vedder."

Mr. Angel had an electric brougham, which was waiting outside. Cora, Mr. Ysnaga, and he got into it, and were trundled off to his flat in Berkeley Street, where he exhibited the treasures he had acquired since the war, a pianola, a gramophone with a solid silver horn, a set of gold plates

which had belonged to a Duke, jade, china, a Titian, a Vermees, a Degaer, a mass of things, jewels, trinkets, bric-a-brac, which his infallible nose for money had picked out as being worth far more than he had paid for them, and these things also added to Cora's intoxication. She lay back in a big chair between the two Jews as they wagged their heads and waved their hands and talked of the money that could be made now that the public had to take what they could get.

"If de Government owe you money, den you're all right, eh?" said Mr. Angel, with a wink and several nods of his little oiled head. "I tell you vat I done for my patriotism. I offered a prize of two hundred pounds for de first Jewish V.C. in de British Navy. Hein?"

So they talked on, and at last Mr. Ysnaga slipped away, leaving Cora, if she could, to win Mr. Angel's approval. That was not difficult. He liked the big greedy Englishwoman, and he thought diamonds would look well on her. He had begun his career in South Africa, and he had a drawerful of little stones of which he gave her four or five as she left him about half-past four in the morning. He said:

"Plenty more. . . . You come again. Hein? You got just de back for my show."

It was bigger business than she had ever done. Ysnaga was getting on. He would do better as jackal to Mr. Angel than plunging by himself. It was clever of him to use her so promptly and she admired him for it. . . . As she walked home she thought that she would make herself indispensable to Mr. Angel while the war lasted—might it go on for ages!—and then afterwards she would take Trevor away to Monte Carlo and San Sebastian and all the places frequented by the big people, and he would get well and they would make money and get married, and she would show him life. . . . He was just an innocent baby, poor lamb, fretting about his dead friends and the war and all that. If people got killed it was their own fault. People who were clever and "fly" never got hurt.

They knew what was what—champagne and liqueurs, and music-hall shows, and diamond studs and motor-cars. They got on the right side of the Government. That was all that was necessary. Having done that they could do as they liked and go as they pleased. . . . As she reached her door in Shaftesbury Avenue Cora took out the stones the Jew had given her. They shone and glittered in her hands.

Estelle came down to open the door grinning with happiness at the old life having begun again. Cora gave her the smallest diamond, and said :

"There you are, Estelle. Don't worry me about money again."

"He's been talking and singing like mad," said Estelle, "but he's quiet now, and I think he's been asleep."

"Did you hear what he said?"

"Oh! about this dam war, miss, and all that."

Cora thought savagely :

"I'll make money and show him what the war's good for. Little fool!"

But directly she entered his flat her consuming love for him returned, and she reeled under the knowledge of what she had done. What a fool she had been! She could easily have got money from the Bank if she had only stopped to think about it; but Trevor was continually dragging her out of her depth, and then she did not know what she was doing.

He was certainly looking better, and his eyes stared at her with a puzzled expression. She leaned over him and said :

"It's me. It's your Cora. Don't you know me?"

He said "Oh yes."

In a series of sharp shocks his memory of her returned and he was overpowered with the scent of pink roses, loose voluptuous blossoms that seemed to fill the room and shake down their scent and their dew upon him, and in his ears rang the sound of the orchestra at the Café Claribel playing "Over There," and "While the Great Big World

goes Turning Round." Through the roses grinned from various directions the same face, Estelle, the coloured maid, with her eyes flashing a suppressed hatred of him, and demanding money . . . money . . . money. . . And there was Mr. Ysnaga with his eyes darting to and fro, and his tongue busy with his teeth.

"What have I to do with all these people?" thought Trevor, and at once he was answered by Cora kissing his lips, his eyes, his neck, and shedding tears upon his cheeks. . . . Oh yes, Cora Dinmont! And it was war-time, and things were somehow different.

As he realized this he became conscious of a sudden rush of health which intoxicated him, and he said childishly:

"I'm better now."

"Oh! you've been so ill, my dear. I don't know what's been the matter with you, and the doctor doesn't know, but you've been terribly ill."

"Are there any letters?"

"Only a few," she said. "There was some one came from the office to ask how you were, but that is all. . . . I've been looking after you."

"Is the war still on?"

He laughed at himself as he asked this question. Of course it was still "on," and would be "on" even if it stopped to-morrow. It would be in the minds of men for generations, and only an imbecile could think of it in terms of defeat or victory or attempt to evade facing it by waving flags and howling national hymns. Perhaps the people who were engaged in it could now realize these truths. . . . He looked quizzically up at Cora. She was not beautiful or good or even charming, but she had made life bearable for him and he owed her more than he could ever repay. Her costume, her hat, offended him, though he had no idea what time it was.

"Why are you dressed like that?" he asked.

"Oh! I been out."

"What time is it?"

She was quick enough to lie.

"It's about half-past eleven, Boy. I been to a cinema to cheer myself up. It's bad weather, and there's been a big explosion at a munitions factory."

She gave him his medicine and some milk, and even the unpleasant taste of the tonic was good.

"Better?" she said.

"Oh yes. I'm going to enjoy myself."

She flung her whole weight on him and hugged him until he was nearly suffocated, but this again stirred his common sense until he wanted to laugh until he cried. There seemed to be so much of her, and it was so like her to hurl her body at him when he wanted her mind, her good-tempered bland and innocent outlook on life. . . .

"I've been sleeping at the foot of your bed," she said in a wheedling tone. "Now that you're better I must take you away. Brighton's the best."

After more kisses, sighs, sobs, heavings and strokings she went reluctantly away to her own flat and Trevor lay awake enjoying the joke of his existence. Only an hour or so after she had gone the post arrived and slipped some letters through his door. He got out of bed and stood in the passage listening to the clatter of the milk being sent up in the lift at the back of the building. . . . Why, it was morning! What had she been doing? Why was she dressed up in that fashion? Why had she lied to him? And what had she done with Sydney? . . . He went through the flat calling the dog, but there was no trace of him except ancient marks on the carpet. . . . Perhaps she had done away with him. But the dog had heard his master moving about, and was barking and scratching at the door of Cora's flat. At last Trevor heard him, and crossed the landing to release him. On the mat he saw something glittering, stopped and picked up a small diamond. He held it in the palm of his hand and stood looking distastefully at Cora's door, then across at his own, pondering the question whether she had dropped it or whether it had been lost by some one, like Ysnaga, who

had visited her. Sydney, smelling his master on the other side of the door, was nearly frantic and was barking in an ecstatic frenzy. An angry voice from upstairs called down:

"Can't you strangle that damned dog of yours?"

Just as Trevor put the key into the lock Cora opened the door and Sydney rushed out.

"I heard the dog," said Trevor.

"I kept him here while you were ill."

He held out the diamond.

"I found this on your mat," he said.

"Oh yes. I've been looking for it everywhere. They—I—had them by me, and I took them out to sell them. You get a good price nowadays because of the munition workers. . . . I thought you'd have been asleep."

"It is morning," said Trevor; and the words had for him far more than their trivial sense. It was indeed morning for him, a new beginning of a new life brimming over with possibilities, a life in which he had broken away from the old illusions which had destroyed so much, and had not yet formed any new ones into which to recede from life's demands. . . . Life could not demand too much of him, nor could he demand too much of life, because it was morning and he had paid the price.

He did not mind Cora's having lied to him. He was only perturbed because she had had to sell her jewels, and he blamed himself for not having made any financial arrangement with her. Hitherto when she had wanted money she had asked for it, and he had given it to her exactly as if he were her husband. They stood staring at each other, groping for each other's thoughts, and at last she said:

"You oughtn't to be up, you know."

"Oh yes," he answered. "I'm going to get up for breakfast. I'm all right. I'm all right."

"Are you!" she said roughly. "Well, I'm tired. I'm going to have a good sleep. . . . Estelle can give you your breakfast in bed." She turned and went away.

"Thanks. . . . Come along, Sydney."

As he closed the door of his own flat he said :

" Sydney, what's she so cross about ? "

And Sydney raised himself on his hind legs and clawed at his master's pyjamas to make him stoop and scratch his head.

XIV

BREAKFAST IN BED

THERE were two letters for Trevor that morning, one from his mother, very anxious at not having heard from him, deploring the air-raids and applauding the great effort made by the women of England, opinions and emotions culled direct from the newspapers, so that Trevor was half-amused, half-irritated by their ineptitude. Extraordinary how the old people struggled in vain to think and feel the right thing, and how remote they were from striking the right note! They could not grasp what was happening or what had happened. Life had been too easy for them and tragedy was past their comprehension. . . . Dear old mother! Bloodthirsty as a Bedouin, her letters with all her endearments and affectionate thoughts were a series of Dervish dances, culled from the newspaper. It was not she who felt these terrible things, but it was she who wanted to feel them, the more so as her own boy had been spared. . . . Trevor could see her in her drawing-room trying to placate and outdo the other mothers. How pathetic! So utterly foreign to them, so completely disconnected with the rest of their lives! It used to hurt him in the days of his grief to have to read thoughts so inadequate, but now he was filled with a fond indulgence. The old people, after all, were only somehow not quite grown-up. They did not understand, that was all. They were trying to do the right thing by the young people, in a way to make amends to them. . . . Thinking so, Trevor was filled with a rush of affection for his mother, and he patted her letter as it lay on his

knee and smiled at it. It did not matter now that she could not understand. He could understand her, and that was enough.

His other letter was from Cherryman, announcing that already ten thousand copies of Hardman's poems had been sold, and asking Trevor if he had any other manuscripts or letters, as another volume would be called for. So exquisite was Trevor's mood that he could be indulgent even with Cherryman. After all, the man was only a happy fool who adored success, so happy that nothing, not even a world-calamity, could upset him. The war to him was splendid because it made his influential friends more powerful, and focused attention on them, and *dulce est pro patria mori*. Cherryman was a cultured gentleman for whom life had always been, always would be, easy. He was so soft that no one could be harsh with him, or abrupt: or say what he really thought, for Cherryman was a very bee to sip the honey from the flower of popular opinion and hoard it against wintry weather when it should come, if ever. Though of course it never did and never would come. As soon as it could discreetly be done Cherryman would enter once more upon the round of dinner-parties, theatres, suppers, dances, week-end visits. . . . Sure enough, over the page there was a post-script: "I am having a few friends from the various Ministries to dinner next week, Wednesday. One must do something to keep ourselves cheerful. Do come. Love."

Trevor grinned. The same old Cherryman! What would he think if he saw Hardman's letters about him? There had been no more scathing critic of the old order than Hardman.

Well, of that old order these two letters represented the best of what was left, and here was Trevor entering upon the new world through the lady of the pink roses, out of compliment to whom he had a paper on his wall of French grey with a frieze of pink roses.

Estelle brought his breakfast.

"Good morning, m'sieu," she said, with her evil grin. "I'm glad yo' better."

"Wonderfully better," replied Trevor. "I can't believe that I've been ill. . . . Is your mistress asleep?"

"No . . ." Estelle grinned. "She looking at her back, m'sieu."

"What?"

"Trying on," explained Estelle.

"What? . . . New clothes?"

"Not 'xactly clothes, m'sieu."

Estelle was mysterious and happy. She gave him a rather impertinent nod and left him, to return in a moment with the morning papers. He ate a hearty breakfast and read these curious sheets which raved about the war in the terms of a generation ago. One paper took its note from Disraeli, another from Gladstone, another from Bright, and he remembered a discussion with his friends in his old rooms in which they had come to the conclusion, since proved only too fully, that there had been no thought in England since the Education Act. Politicians had left it to the people, the people to the politicians, until there was complete stagnation, the ideal condition for the middle-classes. These newspapers were just delightfully irrelevant, utterly ignorant of and indifferent to what was really happening in Europe, impervious to any idea, blissfully unconscious of any social development that might be, and surely was, taking place. They were "getting on with the war," and they were incapable of realizing that the war might be connected vitally with other human activities. The efforts of those who controlled them were directed wholly to keeping their papers up to the pitch of violence of the simple news of a great offensive. They had begun to discuss everything in the terms of military operations.

The doctor arrived.

"Ah! bon, bon. C'est bien," he said, seeing Trevor sitting up and chuckling over newspapers. "You are better, eh?"

"Wonderfully better," replied Trevor. "I'm enjoying myself. I haven't done that for two years."

"Ah! You should not take things so hard. But for you English the war is bad form. You do not understand it that one should take trouble over anything so bestial. You want it be like the football, but the Germans do not play the football."

"Is that what the French think of us?" said Trevor.

"For the French it is serious. Yes. It must go on until the Germans are beaten. Yes. Not only because we hate the Germans, but because we must kill the fear of the militarism before we can get on with serious things. . . . Till then we must suffer disgusting things and fools and chauvinists."

"And newspapers?" asked Trevor.

"Ah! They are bad, but what would you? It would not do for the English to know the truth. They are so innocent. They would think us all scoundrels. They would never understand that in Europe there is happening something serious, much more serious than war. They will not believe it because one cannot define it. It is defining itself. When it is definite they will believe it and give it a legal sanction, but by that time something else will have begun to arrive in Europe. In England you do not live. Although life here is charming, so nice, so nice with everybody trying to be good, everybody taking a commission, everybody protecting and protected. When a Frenchman goes into the army he is poilu, a dirty fellow, he feels and knows that he is dirty, but when an Englishman goes into the Army he is St. George. Ah! I love it."

He was a little alert man with inquisitive eyebrows and short-sighted eyes peering through narrow spectacles. He talked very quickly and with many misplaced accents, so that much of what he said escaped Trevor's ears.

"I have thought often of your case," he said. "It is—you will forgive me an excess of innocence—a refusal to believe that things are as they are. A Frenchman in that condition would find an idea. He would fight for it, die

for it, go to prison for it, murder Poincaré and Clemenceau for it, but here there is no idea to find. There is nothing to make you murder Asquith and Lloyd George. Why should you? They are only men. They have no idea either, and men are good-natured animals. They only want to kill ideas."

"That's very interesting," said Trevor. "But I do accept things as they are."

"Pardon," said the doctor, with a smile. "You are English. Only action could satisfy, and to act it is necessary for you to have illusions. . . . Moi, je suis gynécologue. . . . Illusions are impossible for me. . . . Ideas disgust me. That is why I too am not in the war. How? I attended Belgian refugees. That was my contribution to the calamity. What is yours?"

Trevor looked round his room. That was his contribution, and he was very satisfied with it. He had moved out of the stagnation not very far, but far enough to be able to look at life from a new angle. He tried to explain this to the little doctor, who chuckled and said:

"Ah! vous êtes vraiment patriote. It is precisely what you need in England, but it would go hard with you if you tried to explain that to a Tribunal. Ah! A Tribunal! And that, too, is adorably English. In other countries if you have conscription you have conscription, but here as for once in a way you cannot call it by another name, you invent exceptions and make them a disgrace. Conscription is a horrible thing, yes. But here you make it good form. Ha! So you look at life from a new angle and fall out of it. Bonne chance! . . . I was afraid you had the idea to see life and had seen too much for your innocence. . . ."

Trevor chuckled. "Not yet. How much do I owe you?"

"Ah! Nothing, nothing. The pleasure has been mine to meet an Englishman who can laugh at his newspapers and not be angry with them. I tell you, when I first came to England I was amazed. I read first of a breach

of promise. Breach of promise! What is that? . . . I bought every paper to understand, and I did not. *Mon Dieu!* I did not understand a word of it. Of what, then, are Englishwomen made? That is the mystery. I am a doctor, and I cannot find the clue. . . . They are like the British Constitution, they would drive any other nation mad, but they suit the English, and there is no more to be said. They are attractive, yes, but like flowers or dogs. *Ils n'ont pas le parfum de la femme, le charme épanoui de la Femme.*"

"Would you mind saying that in English?" asked Trevor.

"In English it cannot be said. It means something which has gone, or which you have lost, or which you have never had, or—— But it is impossible to explain. A docility, a discipline. I have the idea that you have paid a very heavy price for your wealth, but as you have paid cheerfully that too is good. What you cannot do by intelligence perhaps you can do better by sentiment. . . . *Bonne chance, mon ami.*"

"Good luck," said Trevor. "Come again. . . . Just what I need, to talk things over with an outsider. The English point of view seems to have disappeared, and I don't know where I am. I don't think we ever imagined that other people thought about us at all except perhaps with envy."

"Ah yes," replied the doctor. "That is it. We envy you. You are so happy. You can imagine nothing worse than not being happy."

Trevor thought with a pang: "Was that all that was worrying me? Was I simply aching to be happy?"

There was enough truth in that to make him uncomfortable. He thought of Cora, and it seemed to him that he had been moved by her out of his lethargy because she was gay and happy and lived in the *Café Claribel* with its brilliant lights, its many mirrors, and its insolently bright music as in her natural element. If so he had not—quite—been playing the game.

The little doctor, though he did not know the cause of it, laughed at his discomfiture.

"Never mind," he said. "You will have your social revolution without horror, so nice, so nice and gentlemanly. You will simply teach the proletariat to be gentlemanly, and the class war, like everything else unpleasant, will melt away under your hands."

That was so far from Trevor's thoughts that he could make no effort to follow it. The doctor put this down to English ignorance, and he added:

"Mais en Angleterre vous n'êtes pas instruit. Votre théorie est déplorable, mais votre pratique—passe. Il n'y a pas de quoi——."

Trevor, like a good Englishman, was beginning to regard the Frenchman as a chattering monkey. He had been discomfited and did not like it, and fell back on traditional contempt. He knew instinctively that what at bottom amused the doctor was himself taking his adventure with Cora seriously. But what could he do! He was neither a commercial Englishman, nor yet an emancipated and cynical Continental. It had been a serious matter, very serious, and for all he knew, would continue to be so.

The doctor's expression as he polished his hat with his coat-sleeve showed pity, amazement, indulgence, admiration, envy, and an almost tearful contempt. The doctor was thinking, and Trevor knew that he was thinking:

"Que fait-il donc dans cette galère?"

And as that was the question that had begun to twinge in Trevor's young and ardent and fortunately irregular heart, he was annoyed that any one should know it. But then, foreigners are so disconcerting, so uncomfortably realistic.

"Wait a moment!" he said, as the doctor was going. "Do you mind handing me that book?"

He pointed to Hardman's poems, which lay on his dressing-table. The doctor took up the book.

"Ah! ça," he said. "I have read the reviews. I know. That is all the English have to say about it. A

romance, an adventure, the Croisade—do you say Crusade ? —the Crusade of the Innocents. We have our Barbusse."

He shrugged the whole of his body.

"It is what I say. You are happy, you English. You simply do not want to know. But what will you do in a world that must know or perish ? "

Beneath the little doctor's banter there was a smouldering passion which almost burst into flame as he said these words. He rather frightened Trevor because his voice became suddenly impersonal. He was no longer a Frenchman, hardly even a human being, but simply a mind that must know, and Trevor was violently excited. This was the new thing. This was the power behind the upheaval, the power against which all the stupid people in all the countries were fighting, the power that was governing and would govern the world.

"I will know," he said. "I will know."

It was a strange moment, and the doctor liked it no more than he. One does not admit the truth when life is dominated by illusions. It is somehow a betrayal. Time ripens slowly for truth, and those who are before their time must live in silence. To return to normal consciousness Trevor said :

"The book is dedicated to me. He was my friend."

"I commiserate you," said the doctor. "You will console yourself."

"Come again."

"Avec plaisir. I have so much to do with the bodies of women that I forget sometimes that men have minds."

"Is your practice all—— ? "

"Yes. Je suis cynique. J'attende la vérité. Elle ne vient pas et il faut vivre. I will gladly come again if only to see an Englishman suffer in his mind."

This time he really went, and Trevor was left to his breakfast, the newspapers, and Sydney, whom he addressed at length :

"I wonder if it is the same with English dogs, Sydney. Must you have everything definite ? I think you must.

You must have me to be definitely your master. I'm sure a French dog would be more detached and just a little critical. . . . Queer. All the time one is thinking things that one never says until everybody is thinking them, and then they are not worth saying, and we listen in amazement to people who can explain themselves. But after all they are only chattering, and life is to be lived. Life doesn't wait until we are ready for it. After all, practical knowledge is something. At any rate one can't argue about it. I shouldn't be here now if I had waited until I had found an exact reason for it. You wouldn't be here if I had stopped to find out if I really wanted a dog. I didn't, but I do now."

Sydney wagged his tail and looked imploringly at the milk-jug. Trevor poured him out a saucerful and held it while Sydney gulped it down.

"And now," said Trevor, "we have to go out into the world to find out what it is really like—Mr. Hobday, Mr. Barnes, Mr. Ysnaga, my mother, my father, Estelle, Cora, Cherryman—but there is no doubt about Cherryman. I would as soon doubt the Lord Mayor. . . . It would be fun to know what the English are really up to. That is what the Germans wanted to know. *Was macht England?*"

Sydney barked.

"You don't like the language? Well, I won't do it again . . ."

Cora came in. She was dressed in a loose Japanese mantle.

"I do hate you having that beastly dog on the bed."

Her appearance gave Trevor an intense pleasure. She was so robust and healthy, so completely without self-consciousness.

"You look quite well, darling," she said. "I want you to tell me what you think of my back."

She had been admiring it all the morning, and turning over in her mind what line she had better take with him. He was so odd that there was no telling whether he really

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cared for her or not, and she had decided to put him to the test by telling him of her offer to go on the stage.

She threw off her mantle and stood in her silk petticoat with her back completely exposed from below the waist upwards. It was certainly a magnificent back with superb lines on either side of the spine and shadows made by the softly clad muscles under the shoulders. She moved her arms, as she had seen dancers do, to make play with her muscles, and Trevor was entranced.

"You certainly are beautifully made," he said.

"Aren't I? I've had an offer to go on the stage."

He was annoyed. That was what she wanted. As the first shadow passed across his face she flew across to him.

"I won't, if it makes my darling cross."

Sydney snarled at her.

"Get away, you little brute," and with one sweep of her arm she flung the dog into the corner, where he lay yelping.

"I'm not cross," he said. "If you want to go. . . . But I didn't know you had any talent. I shouldn't have suspected. . . ."

"It was only Jose Ysnaga," she said. "I saw him while you were ill. He's got a show coming on, him and another Jew. They're making heaps of money, and they want more. They love the theatre, Jews."

Trevor thought:

"It is quite right. It is what she should do. I ought not to interfere with her in any way."

(He had been brought up in Liberal traditions.)

"It's only the money," she said. "And it might be a bit of fun. But of course you mightn't like me to show my back with diamonds on it, and I daresay one leg with a diamond buckle on it. That's what they do in shows."

"I have a lot to learn," thought Trevor, whose memory of the lighter stage was clouded and still roseate from the champagne he had drunk to make it bearable. "Is that all," he said aloud, unable to conceal the bored disgust that rose in him.

"Well, they talked as though it was the chief thing," she said.

"Oh! so you've been talking it over."

She thought he was jealous, and so he was, though very faintly.

"I don't want ever to do anything you don't like. I don't want anything but you. . . . But if I did that then you wouldn't have to go to your office. I'd soon be making lots of money. I'm very good at that, and a woman can do what she likes with the stage just now. There's heaps of money in it, and Ysnaga says you can't keep the public out. He knows what he's talking about, does Ysnaga, though he's reckless."

"I don't like Ysnaga," said Trevor, striving in vain to recover the delightful intellectual detachment of his first moments of recovery. There was too much of Cora to allow of that, and she had changed. He was intrigued to find out the nature of it. Somehow she was not so oppressively enamoured and he liked her better. She was franker, gayer, more herself, less vainly struggling to be something which she imagined he would like her to be.

"You know, Cora," he said, "we can't go back to the life we were living—the Café Claribel, a cinema, an occasional theatre, going to bed late and getting up later, quarrelling and making it up."

"Ooh! I hate quarrelling with you," she said. "It used to tear my heart out. You're so nice, you're so young. I'd like to eat you, and then do what I damn well pleased."

"Well—do," he said.

"Eat you?"

"No. What you damn well please."

"And afterwards?"

"Time enough to think of that."

"You're not going to slip off home?" she asked, in a fury of suspicion.

"No. . . . No. . . . I'm too happy. . . . I don't think

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I could bear home just now. It has become so old-fashioned—the idea of it, I mean.”

“My home’s with you,” she said, kissing him. “I’ve always thought of home when I’m with you. I often see you and me sitting in a big dining-room with a nice maid laying the plates on a long dining-table. You’re older, of course, and I’ve forgotten all about London, and we’re just happy. Of course, the war is over, and all that . . .”

Her voice was so sentimental that Trevor, feeling sure that she was going to talk about a little voice crying upstairs, cut her short with :

“One doesn’t make plans nowadays, Cora. One waits for something to turn up and decide—anything that has to be decided.”

“We’ll travel, then ?”

“They won’t let us travel for years. When they have forgotten about German spies they will be looking out for anarchists.”

Disappointed at her failure to draw him into the delightful game of making plans, she said :

“Ooh ! well, you’re better. That’s the main thing. And we’re happy as we are. Lots of girls ’d give their eyes to be me. Did the doctor say you could get up ?”

“We didn’t discuss that,” said Trevor. “He simply said I was well. . . . And so I am. We’ll go out to-night, if you like.”

She got his clothes for him and helped him to dress, but he was so weak that there could be no question of his going out. He wrote her a cheque for ten pounds. She went out and cashed it, wired to the Metropole at Brighton for a room, and bought a magnificent dinner, caviare, cold pheasant, potato salad, cheese, crystallized fruits, chocolates, and two bottles of champagne.

After dinner he tried to read to her, but it was no good. She could not listen, though she tried very hard. Watching her, he discovered that she simply lost the thread of a sentence of any length, and that words used in their

exact sense had no meaning for her. He was a little depressed, but also relieved, that his new clean intellectual life, to preserve which he had struggled for so long, did not exist for her, and he was amused at the comfortable pleasure it gave him to have his relationship with her defined. He was neither ashamed of it nor proud of them. It just was a thing that had happened to him and had somehow acquired a permanent quality, perhaps because Cora was permanent, an unalterable type, a personality that had always been and always would be. Everything else in the world might be shifting and inapprehensible, but she remained.

His reading bored her—bored her until she wanted to scream. She had to pinch herself to remember that he had been ill and that she must be nice to him. But she wanted him to “wake up,” to want fun and nothing else, to take life as though it were a box of crystallized fruits, like the box lying between them. It was a large box, but while he read she devoured the whole of its contents, beginning with the cherries and ending with the limes.

XV

BRIGHTON

THE Metropole was exactly what Trevor wanted after his illness, Brighton the very place to keep him entertained and give him opportunities for salt-water cures. To begin with, the train contained comic types that seemed to have been especially created to be amused by sides: enormously fat men, full-bosomed jewelled women, middle-aged men whose character was in their trousers and their spats, absurd young women delightfully conscious of being wicked, raffish young men trying hard to look as if they were rich and used to travelling first class, nervously sanguine of amorous adventure. They eyed the self-conscious young women, queer ancient men who looked as though they had miraculously made a fortune out of a travelling Punch and Judy Show, soldiers in khaki and hospital blue, thin and sickly-looking young officers with red and green tabs. . . . A wonderful show. . . . A Punch and Judy Show. . . . And Trevor saw it all with the clear eyes of convalescence. . . . Even the antique memories aroused by the names of the stations struck an absurd note, and so did the sight of blue-coat boys in yellow stockings walking the lanes near Horsham. . . . In the strange throng Trevor felt a reluctance to give up anything that had become familiar. There were types that ought long ago to have been forgotten, but now obviously persisted with undiminished zest; types that reminded him of Frith's Derby Day, people for whom life was one long Derby. Two couples in his own carriage were obviously music-hall performers, terribly, bewildering-

ingly rich, amusing automata who went on from year to year and had lost all sense, even all taste for life. They were going to Brighton because Brighton was expensive, the best place, next to London, in which to throw money away.

As the train slowed down he jumped out, because he did not wish to miss one of these comic people. They had even a manner reserved for arriving at Brighton, a deliberate holiday air of being released for the time being from their responsibilities and routine. They opened their mouths as if to gulp in the sea air, though the atmosphere of the station was as foul as that of Victoria: but especially and most wonderfully they brought London with them in their expression, their walk, their obvious refusal to accept any impression. . . . There was a rich Jew who tore fussily along the platform, seeing nothing, knowing nothing, but that he must spend Saturday night and Sunday at his seaside house, and go back to his office on Monday morning. Every line of his back said fussily: "I am a very busy man! I am a very busy man!" . . . Trevor delighted in them all. It was worth while to have been ill to gain this heightened sense of external detail. . . .

Cora, too, had her Brighton manner. She belonged perfectly to the place, and found nothing strange in the people.

"What are you staring at? Have you never been to the seaside before?"

"Not in war-time," he replied. "One would expect it to be different, but it isn't, except for the soldiers, and even they only look like people dressed up to look at the sea."

Indeed, the number of soldiers in the streets and on the Parade was astounding, and they had nothing, nothing whatever to do except to stroll listlessly along and spring to the salute when an officer passed them. Their vacancy, far more than their khaki, was the only indication in the bustling holiday scene that there was somewhere in the world an immense oppressive tragedy from which no one

could escape. . . . Here thousands seemed to have escaped. The hotel was full to overflowing of oppressively rich people whose one aim was to spend money and to be seen spending it, and the first person they met in the hall was Mr. Ysnaga. He was standing rubbing at his finger-nails, just by the bureau, slyly watching the arrivals and peering at the register to find out their names.

"Why, Cora!" he said.

"Oh, damn!" she muttered under her breath.

"If I'd have known you could have come down with us by car."

There was no way out of it. She had to introduce Trevor, who, on the whole, was rather pleased. He was feeling charitable towards the whole world, and was in revolt against the exclusiveness and reserve which had always rather stood in his way.

He gave Ysnaga his hand with a friendly grin:

"I've been ill," he said. "We've come down for convalescence."

"Wonderful air, Brighton; and now it's a great place for meeting your pals."

He stood scrutinizing Trevor with that extraordinary lack of manners which in a Jew seems to be incurable, and sized him up as:

"No nous. Rich but cautious. Probably trust funds. Oxford or Cambridge. Innocent as a babe. What the hell does he want with Cora?"

He asked politely:

"Any news in London. We left this morning and went out of our way on business. My friend is looking out for a big house with a tradition, pictures, men in armour, walled garden, all that, and a maze if possible. He's set his heart on a maze." He grinned, as he did everything, slyly. "I tell him that if he waits a little longer he'll be able to buy Hampton Court."

"A modern Wolsey?" asked Trevor; but Mr. Ysnaga had never heard of Wolsey. To him the greatest figure in history, so far as he knew it, was Rufus Isaacs.

Trevor did not, could not like the Jew.

"Oil and water don't mix," he thought.

"Well," said Mr. Ysnaga, "I hope you'll soon get strong. If you would like it, I'm sure my friend would let you have his car."

"Thank you," said Trevor.

The porter was ready to take their luggage up to their room. They were registered as Mr. and Mrs. T. Mathew.

As they entered the lift Mr. Angel came down the stairs, as usual almost tottering on his little loose legs that were so ridiculously inadequate for his heavy, thick-set body. Mr. Ysnaga stood pulling at his long nose pondering the situation, which was a little difficult because Cora had made a deep impression on Mr. Angel's susceptibilities.

"Cora's here," he said, as the future millionaire joined him.

"Dat's good. Dat's good."

"She's brought down a young friend who's been ill."

"A nice girl?"

"No. It's a boy. A college pup who's been a friend of hers for a long time. . . . She's that kind-hearted. She'd do the same for a cat or a dog or an elephant. Any sick thing she'll take charge of, and she'll roar and howl if you take it away from her. . . ."

"Ach! I knew she was a good girl," said Mr. Angel, perspiring with appreciation. Mr. Ysnaga perspired with relief. He knew that Mr. Angel was almost hysterically kind.

"Ach! she's a fine girl and a good girl. Vot a vife she would make! Ask them to dinner. Is the boy a shentleman?"

"Yes, I said college," replied Mr. Ysnaga. "He looks as if he'd been put through it. I've seen the same eyes in men who have had shell-shock."

"Ve can't do too much for dose poor boys," said Mr. Angel.

Upstairs, from the window of their room at the front of the hotel Trevor looked out at the wintry sea. A strong

wind was blowing, the water was almost black, and white horses tossed and spumed out of the waves. He laughed and said :

"You shall wheel me down in a bath-chair like little Dombey, Cora, and I will look wistful and pale, and ask : 'What are the wild waves saying ?' "

But Cora was not listening. She was slowly unpacking, and she was boiling over with hatred of Mr. Ysnaga because she had had to introduce Trevor to him.

"By Jove, it is good," said Trevor. "Winter's the time for the sea. It's alive then. . . . I wish we'd brought Sydney, but they don't like dogs in hotels, and it isn't fair to the dog either. . . ."

He turned away from the window and watched Cora. Extraordinary the number of things a woman could find to do, and her insistence on doing everything thoroughly ! Why not unpack as you want things ? . . . But no, she must have everything taken out and put in its place. She must make even an hotel bedroom an abiding-place and surround herself with familiar detail. The very bed must be decked out to be like her own, and Cora adorned this bed with pink ribbons and a satin night-dress case embroidered with pink roses, and across the end of it she threw her muslin dressing-gown, on which again were pink roses. . . . Trevor enjoyed watching her. He had never seen her before without the cloud of his chaotic feelings. She had been a refuge, an asylum, rather than a person, and he had been young and suffering, and now, being young, he thought he was neither, that all the troubles of his life were over, and that henceforth in a pleasant philosophic detachment—which he had longed to enjoy for ever at Cambridge—he could live in security in delightfully inappropriate surroundings. Cora had satisfied his curiosity about women, whose mystery was surely over-rated, and he would be able to devote himself to showing the importance of doing nothing. Cora's movements pleased him vastly. He liked her way of turning everything, absolutely everything, into physical enjoyment.

When she sat in a chair she seemed to sink into its embrace, when she dressed herself she melted into her clothes, and when she put on her shoes she could never help stroking her legs in approval. . . . All that pleased him. It was so gloriously healthy in all the nervous excitement that pervaded the streets, the thoroughfares, and all public places. . . . It was a little disconcerting, perhaps, that her pleasure in him was of exactly the same order as her delight in shops and stockings and muslin dressing-gowns and good wine, but that again had the advantage of leaving him free to think his own thoughts and ride his own hobby-horses unmolested.

A messenger arrived with a note from Mr. Angel, in which he hoped that Cora would dine with him and bring her friend, if he were well enough. She crumpled up the note and said :

"Certainly not."

"Certainly not what?" asked Trevor, who was lying back in a big chair, watching her.

She decided not to lie, and said :

"It's Ysnaga. He wants us both to dine with him and his old friend."

"Another Jew?"

"Yes. A low Jew."

"I'd like to go. I'm interested in Jews. They are important in modern life."

"I shan't go."

"Why not?"

"Oh! I've a headache . . . I'll dine here. You can go. It will do you good to go among the people. You're always talking about them."

"Well, I'll stay with you."

"No. Don't offend them. They'll think you despise them because they're Jews. I couldn't face it. You don't know what it's been like all the time you've been ill."

By this she had really persuaded herself that the strain had been very severe upon her, and she convinced Trevor

that it was so. He went to her and made a fuss of her, told her what a splendid creature she was, and how he loved her, and would be eternally grateful to her, and this made her so happy that in the end she felt she was making a great sacrifice in letting him dine with Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga when she was too unwell to go. At last she had almost to force him out of the room, while she stayed and enjoyed a time of crucial anxiety, wondering whether Mr. Angel would be jealous. . . . Though she was going to have a big house and a red dining-room with Trevor and be a good woman, yet Mr. Angel had a drawer full of diamonds. . . . Downstairs in the great dining-room the three men dined together at a window looking out to the sea, and the only one who thought of Cora at all was Mr. Ysnaga, and he was simply calculating as to what would happen to Cora if she broke with Trevor, who had had so remarkable an effect on her. Would she just sink back, take to drink, and muddling through, or would her admirable commercial sense assert itself and help her to exploit the new charm she had won?

Mr. Angel was so kind that Trevor warmed to him at once. The little Jew looked anxiously at his pale face, and made minute inquiries as to his symptoms, his digestion, his sleep, the length of his illness, the quality of his medical attendance. A son or a brother could not have given him more anxiety, and when he discovered that Trevor was debarred by his heart from taking part in the war he both commiserated and congratulated him in one breath. With a few veiled leading questions he discovered that his young friend was rich, and had always been used to wealth, and his homage was unbounded.

The dinner was wild in its extravagance. Hardly anything that they ate was in season, and they had a different wine with every course, and Mr. Angel looked with pathetic dog-like eyes at Trevor, hoping against hope that he would be astonished, and when he was not was confirmed in his adoration of him as an English gentleman. He was in evening clothes with a velvet collar and much-braided

trousers, and in his shirt front shone an enormous diamond, and Trevor found after a time that it was better to keep his host's manners more audible than visible; and this suited Mr. Angel, because he could never meet the eye of any interlocutor.

With dessert he became expansive :

"Sixteen years ago," he said, "I had not a penny, not a fard'n in de welt, and dat was how I began. I had a friend, a Russian Jew, so simple. Straight from Russia. In London he vos unhappy. Lipinsky his name vos. Ach! He vos so unhappy dat he could not lift up his kop, his head, to make a living. He vos a tailor, and made suits all day for a few shillings. Vell! De Vest End vos too far for him to go who had come all de vay from Russia. Dey are like dat: many of them. From Russia to the East End, dat is as far as dey can go. But I vos clever, and knew my vays about. Mr. Lipinsky made suits and got no money, but I could get money. I bought Lipinsky's suits, for a few shillings, and I had a friend who stole silk handkerchiefs. I put a silk handkerchief in de pocket of Lipinsky's suits, press dem vell, give dem a schnell and a smart look and take dem to a Vest End pawnbroker. 'Give me . . . pounds on dis suit,' I say, walking in like a flash Vest End Jew, and de pawnbroker give . . . Vell, I had hum-reas of suits like dat; and so I make beginnings. Only beginnings are interesting. See? It goes on like dat. . . . Vell is cheap in one place is dear in another."

And he went on talking lovingly about the Jews until Trevor was entranced with this revelation of that world within the world, so passionate, so vital, so full of indomitable energy. It was quite clear from Mr. Angel's talk that he was rather bewildered with the complexity of the Gentile world. He admired and loved it; hungered to be of it, but could not release his tenacious grip on essentials. His humanity saved him from being ignoble in his insistence that a man must eat and make money before there was room for anything else. This insistence was not explicit. It ran through all this talk, and made

it seem to Trevor like a hot wind blowing from some sun-scorched place in which life could not be comfortable.

"And Mr. Lipinsky," he asked. "Is he still making suits?"

"By the thousand!" beamed Mr. Angel. "He is in one of my factories. I do not forget my friends. But he is sad. His wife is dead, and his daughter Sophina is with thieves and schelms in de Vest End. She got a taste for eveningdress——"

Mr. Angel pronounced evening dress as one word with the accent on the first syllable, and he made it convey what was in his mind: nobility, ease, good manners, everything desirable and unattainable by Jews, and he also conveyed the terrible fate that overtakes young Jewesses who think that there are short cuts to these things.

Trevor knew a little about Jews, because at Cambridge he had passed through a period of hero worship of Lasalle, and he tried to talk about him, but the name meant no more to Mr. Angel than that of Moses. What absorbed him was the rise of poor Jews to opulence and glory, so that they could feast with real gentlemen, like Trevor Mathew, and apparently for him it had been something of a struggle until the war came, which swept away all resistance to his operations and also, alas! all the gentlemen and all the ladies.

As the dinner drew to its close, Mr. Angel said:

"Ach! You begin to look better already. To-morrow you shall have my car for a drive over the Downs. You must be well so that when you come back to London you can begin to make yourself a career, hein? I'll buy you a newspaper, eh? Or you could write a book, ch? And I would advertise it all over London. . . ."

"But I'm going to be a lawyer."

"Vell, de Prime Minister of England is a lawyer, isn't he?"

"I'd rather just enjoy myself, thanks," said Trevor, and his answer delighted Mr. Angel.

"A good-looking boy like you," he said, "could marry

de richest girl in de welt, and make himself famous, and be good to de poor and get all de vomen to vote for him. But first you must get vell."

His offers were so overwhelming, he was so nervously eager to do something to help that Trevor could find no way out of accepting the use of the car on the morrow, hoping against hope that he would not have also to accept the company of Mr. Ysnaga and Mr. Angel.

That fear was set at rest on the Sunday afternoon. The two Jews had to go to see a friend who had a big business.

Mr. Ysnaga whispered to Cora as she stood waiting for the car:

"He's raving about the boy, quite silly about him."

"You leave the boy alone," said Cora jealously. "He's too good for the likes of you."

Ysnaga grinned and looked down his long nose. Mr. Angel was fussing round Trevor as though he were a prize animal with a delicate constitution that he had bought for thousands of guineas.

"You must wrap up vell. The chief thing after an illness is not to catch cold. . . ." He turned to Cora and said, "You must look after him vell, Cora. Don't let him valk a step."

He fussed round while they got into the car, himself wrapped the immense fur round them, and stood waving his hand as the nigger chauffeur pressed the accelerator and set the car moving.

The back of the chauffeur's head was familiar to Trevor. He looked round at the car. It was that in which they had driven up from Sussex. That somehow annoyed him, and at the same time made him want to laugh uncontrollably at the idea of his life being bound up with these gorgeous Hebrews. He had, too, a happy sense of being reconciled at last to this new civilization which had sprung into being in his own lifetime, a civilization in which, so long as you had money in your pocket, you need make no exertion of mind or body, and if you were so minded, could just lie back and laugh. That was his

inclination now, to lie back and laugh and to contemplate his old life dwindling into the remote distance, a narrow life of earnest effort, of easily satisfied ambitions, of self-contentment, and most damnable exclusive in its morals. . . . It was still going on up in the North, waiting to receive him after he had been schooled to it by Hobday, Treves and Treves, and Henry Hobday was its perfect exemplar. Bred, trained, schooled in the law, he was braced and renewed by the lawlessness of Mr. Angel, who had pawned worthless clothes, and Mr. Ysnaga, who had been in prison.

The car was powerful. The reserve of force in it was intoxicating, and soon they were up on the Downs scudding along the chalk-white roads, and eating up the steep hills, plunging into little sheltered villages in the folds of the Downs, then climbing up to a green summit from which they could see the sea under the wintry sun cold and glassy. Great ships went slowly by far out, and ominous grey warships filed past on patrol. It was very cool, and the air nipped and stung. Once they were out in the open the negro chauffeur gave vent to his pride in the car and sent it rocking and humming along at sixty, seventy-five an hour, and for three miles on the very top of the Downs above Lewes he tried to race an aeroplane which appeared above them filling the air with the hum of its engines and the whizz of its planes as the wind sang through them. Speed! Ah, that was the real thing that had sent the old ideas scattering like so many chickens on the road. . . . The car went loping down a long hill with its engine shut off. At the bottom they turned a corner and came on a flock of sheep with an old shepherd, brown as a walnut, half-asleep, pushing himself along with his heavy stick. . . . Cora screamed. The chauffeur turned up a grassy bank, and almost overturned the car, but with a dexterous and mighty twist of the front wheels righted it, and came down into the road again. The sheep started running, huddling together, stopping, running on again, and it took them more than half an hour to pass them,

while the engine thrummed impatiently, and then they only escaped by turning up a narrow lane which they had to pursue for several miles until at last it brought them out suddenly and unexpectedly on the Brighton road, with its black tarred surface and its heavily burdened telegraph poles. . . . As they turned into it they came on a car which had stopped. It contained a lovely girl, and on its step was sitting disconsolately a very distinguished-looking, grey-haired man. Trevor pressed the "stop" button, and the negro chauffeur drew up.

"Can we do anything?" asked Trevor.

"My damn fool of a chauffeur sent me out with the tank leaking. I've stopped that, but I've run out of petrol."

The negro turned and said:

"Plenty petrol, sah."

He got down, took out a can of petrol and handed it to the disconsolate stranger, who was profuse in his thanks. Trevor had an impression that he had met him before, but thought he might have seen his portrait in the papers. The stranger had that kind of face, probably a successful business man promoted into some kind of Controller. The girl he was sure he had seen, but he could not remember where. . . . He thought her extraordinarily beautiful, and he was deeply moved by the sadness in her eyes and the firmness of her lips. She never looked at him, but stared straight in front of her as though she were trying to define some vague thought in her mind. Her expression, her whole attitude, put a stop to Trevor's exhilaration, and he was maddened when, as they moved off, Cora, turning contemptuously, said:

"Some City man with his typist."

"Not at all. She looks more like his daughter."

"Daughter!" she sniffed.

Trevor lay back and cudgelled his brains to find out where and when he had seen the couple before. They had been somehow different, perhaps not alone. . . . No. He could not place them.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Cora, jealously.

"Nothing. Sheep, I think. They do take a hell of a time to get out of the way."

They were in Brighton again, the object of envious eyes, and some of the women, who knew Cora, made audible remarks. At the hotel they were received with all the respect due to a duke and duchess, and both of them took it as their just and due. Had they not enjoyed an excursion in the motor car of a future millionaire?

Cora went upstairs, but Trevor stayed in the hall hoping that the stranger and the beautiful girl would arrive, but they did not come, and at last he went up to his room. Cora was brushing her hair, and had changed into her muslin *peignoir* with the pattern of pink roses. Trevor stared at them. They were the clue he had been seeking. A grey dress. . . . But what had that to do with pink roses?

He went to the window and looked out at the grey sea. Oh! yes. There was a boy, a nice boy of whom he remembered thinking that it was a pity he would have to grow up into a soldier instead of a man. . . . But where?

Cora started chattering, and he silenced her abruptly.

"How dare you speak to me like that!" she said. "How dare you?"

"I didn't mean to be rude; I was thinking."

"That's just like a man. He leans on a woman when he is ill, and forgets all about her when he is well."

"Don't be silly, Cora. I was only trying to remember something."

"You're quite different down here. I don't believe you love me a bit."

"Of course I love you, Cora, or I shouldn't be here. . . . I wish you could get that firmly and finally into your head, that it would be impossible for me if I did not love you. . . ."

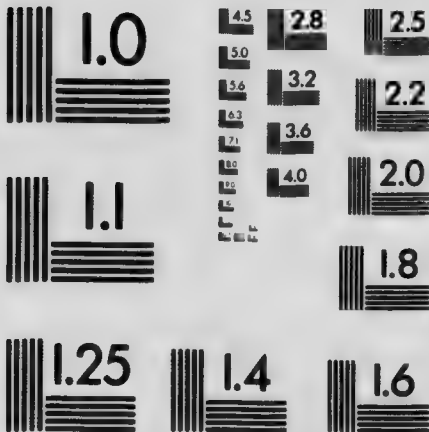
Again a messenger arrived with a note from Mr. Angel inviting them both to dinner.

"Oh, damn the Jew!" said Trevor irritably. "Why can't



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he leave us alone? He behaves as though he had bought us. . . . We'll have dinner up here."

"I want to go," said Cora. "They're going back to London to-morrow, and we shall have all our time to ourselves."

"Then why didn't you come last night?"

"I had a headache."

Her chatter had wrecked his pursuit of the clue, the grey dress and a boy. . . . Where on earth had he seen them before and why had she changed so vitally? He tried to tell himself that it was no affair of his, and to occupy himself and to shake off the teasing memory, he decided to pay Mr. Angel the compliment of evening dress.

"I like your old Jew, Cora," he said. "He's a scoundrel, but he is so amazingly kind. That's one thing that good people seem to forget in their struggle to maintain their goodness—to be kind." He was thinking of his father and mother. "They want to know what people have done before they will try to find out what they want."

"I've never met anybody good except you, Boy," said Cora, falling in love with him all over again when she saw him, clean-cut and handsome, in his evening clothes.

"Eveningdress," he said, mimicking Mr. Angel. "Der vos no shordt cut to eveningdress for Jewish girls."

Cora shrieked with laughter.

"That's him to the life, Boy. . . . Ooh! You are clever. You could make fifty pounds a week on the halls. . . . I often think it's a pity you're so well off. It would make a man of you to be poor. . . . Do run down and get me some flowers. I want to look my best to-night. You look so topping in your evening dress."

Trevor went down and bought her some chrysanthemums. In the florist's shop was a bunch of delicious rose-buds, and they set him off thinking again. . . . A grey dress. . . . A boy. . . . A boy. . . . A grey dress. . . . It was maddening that his memory should stop short at that. In London, of course: and he thought of the office, but that

was absurd. He had never seen a beautiful girl in the office, and Cora's suggestion that she was a typist was cruelly grotesque. A girl with those eyes and that chin would never endure drudgery of that kind nor, surely, would any one dare inflict it on her. . . .

"Lovely roses," said the florist; "the last this year."

"How much?"

"Ten shillings a bunch."

Trevor wanted to buy them for himself. He knew that Cora would take them as a tender allusion to their meeting in the park, and that had slipped away into the irrecoverable, almost the immemorable past. It was one of the things which already he discarded as being on the other side of his illness.

"How much for one?" he asked.

"One shilling," said the florist.

Trevor had given up thinking of war prices, which had become so fluid that one simply gulped down his astonishment and paid. The world had been hitched to all the cars of all the Angels, and there was simply no keeping pace with it.

The florist gave him one rose-bud, and he pinned it in his coat and went upstairs again fingering it lovingly. Cora's eyes fastened on it as soon as he entered, and he explained:

"I bought it for luck. There were only a few left, and I thought you would like something more showy."

Her lower lip began to work.

"I never thought of roses," she said. "You know what they mean to me. I won't wear your horrid chrysanthemums. Give me the rose."

Reluctantly he gave it to her, and she pinned it on the bosom of her gorgeous blue gown, where it was lost, dismally, hopelessly, and Trevor felt sorry. It needed a simple grey dress. . . . Oh, damn the grey dress!

Mr. Angel had also been to the florist, and his table in the window was overwhelmed with flowers and greenstuff.

He was again in evening dress and had a green silk handkerchief stuffed into his waistcoat, and the first thing he said was :

"If you like I can leave the car for you next week. I can buy a new one."

"Oh no, thanks," said Trevor. "It will do me good to walk. I'll crawl along to the Parade, and when I can walk as far as Rottingdean then I shall know it is time to go back to work."

"Vork!" said Mr. Angel. "In ten years it will be time for you to talk of vork. You find out vot de vorld is like first, hein?"

"I'm doing my best," said Trevor, with a grin. "One learns something in a lawyer's office."

"What office are you in?" asked Mr. Ysnaga politely.

"Hobday, Treves and Treves. A commercial firm."

Mr. Ysnaga's face gave an almost imperceptible twitch.

"Oh, yes!" he said. "I know them. Mr. Barnes still there?"

"Still there," answered Trevor. "Working like a ferret."

"Barnes!" cried Cora. "Why, that's the man——"

And her face winced as Mr. Ysnaga kicked her under the table.

"De law," said Mr. Angel, "is too slow for me. Ven I have a dispute I settle him and take my revenge afterwards."

Trevor felt absolutely certain that Mr. Ysnaga had kicked Cora under the table, and he was annoyed. He remembered little Mr. Barnes in the office throwing back his head and shouting with laughter at the thought of Mr. Ysnaga in prison, and he was suddenly sickened by his society. Angel he liked. Cora was the human being nearest to him, but Ysnaga was—well, to put it bluntly—a swindler. It was written all over his face.

The dinner was not going well, but Mr. Angel was oblivious of it. He was prostrate in adoration of the young

gentleman who had put on evening dress in his honour, and wore it as only an English gentleman could. He had been quite hurt that Trevor would not accept his car for the week, but to hide his feelings talked volubly of his plans for making more money out of the theatre, and at last his talk swamped the discomfort of the sudden intrusion of Mr. Barnes.

"I'm never wrong about money," said Mr. Angel. "Dere's money in Cora and dere's money in you. . . ."

"You should hear him mimic," said Cora. "He keeps me laughing sometimes for hours, and you should see him making fun of the cinema. He'd make you die of laughing, and there's a friend of his, Mr. Cherryman, whom I've never seen, but it's the man alive."

"The public likes mimicry," said Mr. Ysnaga, uncomfortably attempting to keep his end up. "They love imitations of George Robey and Grock and George Formby . . ."

But nobody paid any attention to him, and his face shone with his uneasiness. He had worked for years to make himself indispensable to Mr. Angel, and now he was being brushed aside by the old fool's extraordinary passion for the young Englishman.

"Do . . . do Mr. Cherryman," urged Cora, and Trevor, to oblige, gave an exact imitation of the editor of the *Hardman* poems, shaking his shoulders as he talked in a little voice, saying the things that everybody was saying, hurt if anybody expressed his own thoughts or his own feelings, eager to be charmed by everything and everybody, finding everything and everybody charming, exquisite, divine. . . . Mr. Angel laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. "Ho! Ho! Ho!" he said. "That's him . . . Oh! That's him. I've never met him, but there's thousands of him, and they're running the war. Ho! Ho! Ho! They're running the war!"

But Trevor's thoughts were sixty miles away. His concentration on Cherryman had reminded him. Of course he had been with Cherryman, just turning into St. James's

Park when Cherryman had swept his hat off to the stranger, and the girl and a boy. She was wearing a grey dress, and at her breast she had a single pink rose, and so little had he noticed them at the time that he had not even asked who they were. Father, daughter, and son, probably. . . . A nice family, good people, and very pleasant to think of now with the old Jew laughing until greasy tears oozed out of his eyes, and Mr. Ysnaga calculating, always calculating, and Cora eating, drinking, laughing voluptuously. . . . He glared at the pink rose-bud at her bosom and longed to pluck it out. It was so inappropriate as to be almost a desecration.

"Ho! Ho! Ho!" laughed Mr. Angel. "Ho! I haven't enjoyed myself so for years and years. Ach! You must come to dinner with me in London, to see my flat."

Cora winced.

"I haf pictures, and jade, and jewels, and old furniture, and china and porcelain, and a gramophone, and an electrophone and a pianola, and soon I shall have a big house in the country when a lord sells up, and then I shall have a band of my own, and a music-hall at the week-end parties. . . . Ach! if you would only help me mit it all, and bring young gentlemen like yourself. . . ."

The prospect thus opened was so fantastic that it almost tempted Trevor. What could he not do with the dazzling opportunity? . . . But he shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing particular that he wanted to do. His own generation was guttered out. The younger generation would probably not understand him, and the ideas that he and his friends had had were made to look rather silly by the war and the immense change it had wrought in the social fabric. . . . Still, a millionaire asking him, almost imploring him, to waste his money for him. . . . He looked across at Cora. No, it was impossible. With her there could be nothing but food and clothes and music-halls. She and Ysnaga could waste Mr. Angel's money magnificently. . . .

At once he was furious with himself for coupling her

name with Ysnaga's. That was one of the things he could never admit to himself. He did not know, did not want to know, what had been in her life and before himself. And he had fully developed the British faculty of not seeing what he did not wish to see.

"I vant a place mit a great park," said Mr. Angel, "and an old vall dot runs for miles and miles along de road. And ven people go by in der cars I vant dem to say: 'Who lives dere? . . . Oh! dot's Angel, vot used to pawn Mr. Lipinsky's trousers in de Vest End . . .'. And I should feel so happy in it if you vos dere. It could be your place too, and you could be Prime Minister of England. . . ."

"No great difficulty about that," said Trevor. "Anybody who really wanted the job could have it now for the asking."

He was so worried by the rose-bud in Cora's bosom that he could not pay much attention to what Mr. Angel said, and Mr. Ysnaga brightened up.

"To-morrow," he said, "Mr. Angel and I are going to look for a park. I thought of looking in the Goodwood district. That's a great place for the big bugs. Some of 'em must be feeling a draught."

"I von't buy a dem thing," said Mr. Angel, pettishly, "unless Mr. Mathew promises dot he vill come to shtay mit me."

"I'll promise," said Trevor carelessly.

"Den it's a pargain. . . . Ach! If you could imitate for me my General at de Var Office. You know, Mr. Mathew, he helps me on mit my coat as if I was a lord, and shakes hands mit me mit his vite hand and de nails all manicured . . ."

It had just begun to penetrate to Cora's brain what was being offered to Trevor, and she was gasping like a fish. . . . A big house and a red dining-room! These new possibilities blew that ideal sky high. . . . She saw herself with cars, as many drawing-rooms as she liked, footmen, maids, a man and wife at the lodge, like the people in the manor-house at home, but ten times, a thousand

times, as rich, and with London—London to be ransacked if only she could manage Trevor. She knew she could. He had made no protest as one by one she had snipped the threads that bound him to his former life. . . . What chance! It almost turned her sick. Here he was being offered almost inconceivable wealth and power, and he was treating it nonchalantly, behaving as though Mr. Angel were offering him a cigar. It was almost more than she could bear. She could see Ysnaga's little eyes glistening from one to the other, from Angel to Trevor and from Trevor to herself, just as in the old days he used to look. She had forgotten the old days for so long now, and suddenly she found herself staring into them with horror. . . . Ysnaga, as she had first found him in a poor restaurant in the West End, down at heel and woefully shabby, but—agued with ambition and talking romantically big about himself. . . . She had picked him up and cleaned him down and he had been useful to her. . . . And now she wanted Trevor to be terribly, terribly rich, so that she could show her mettle. . . . She could hardly rest until upon Mr. Angel's insistence, Trevor promised that he would go and see him in London, and would stay with him in his park when he bought it from a lord.

The two Jews and Cora were feverishly excited, but Trevor was thinking of St. James's Park and a grey dress and a pink rose, and, if there was any fever in him it was to go back to London as soon as possible, and to ask Cherryman about the grey-haired man and the girl in the grey dress and the boy.

XVI

THE RUSSIAN FLAVOUR

It took Sophina Lipinsky six weeks to discover and to accept that there was not the slightest chance of Carline marrying her. Of her as woman he was almost oblivious. With her as Russian he was infatuated: she quickly made up her mind as to the best way to exploit the situation that had arisen. Out of her life with Finberg she remembered just enough to keep her going, and when in difficulties she found the easiest way out was to talk broken English. She had known Russian and Polish Jews at home, and she had a good ear and could reproduce their accent: but she was hard put to it for her invention to keep pace with Carline's appetite. He had sentimentalized the Russian peasant, and looked to Dostoevsky's Idiot as the type which should save the world and give London society the savour which it had lost. He filled his rooms with Ikons which he obtained from civil servants who were sent on missions to Petrograd, and he seriously contemplated joining the Russian Orthodox Church. . . . What he wanted from Sophina was to learn how to be a Russian. He had tried with various Russian men, but they had laughed at him and had snubbed him unmercifully. Sophina to him was a gift sent straight from Heaven. He knew that Russians sat or lay on the floor, that they slept on the stove, that they spent days and nights in cafés, listening to gipsies, that they were always on the verge of suicide, that they invariably carried revolvers to be ready for it, that they talked for hours on end, that they wanted to be Russian, only Russian,

and nothing but Russian, that they drank vodka and ate enormously, that they took sugar and lemon in their tea that they lived in groups and all together ran wildly from house to house discussing either some profound idealism or an obscure psychological complex in one of their friends that they did nothing at all for long stretches of time that what they did was done spasmodically and frantically that they hated and dreaded Jews, and that they told each other comic stories from Tschekov, poetic passages from Poushkin and witticisms from Gogol. And he did all these things, but never quite to his satisfaction, and he looked to Sophina to give him the real Russian flavour. She did her best, read Dostoievsky and Tolstoi, but even then was often in difficulties until she invented an early life for herself which solved the problem.

She told him, to his exquisite delight, that she of course had not lived a normal life in Russia, as she had been taken at a very early age into the school for the Imperial Russian Ballet, where life was more strict and strenuous even than that of a convent. She had been trained and trained, beaten, half-starved, drilled, taught nothing but dancing, dancing, dancing, from morning to night : nothing else, nothing for her head, nothing for the soul, her Russian soul.

No invention could have been luckier. Carline was ecstatic. His Russian passion had begun with the Russian Ballet : and had only been nurtured by the plentiful supply of Russian novels which had been put forth in such abundance because there is no copyright in them, and the Russian author goes unpaid : the Russian alliance had brought it to its fever heat, and that vast country which to most Englishmen remained an enigma became to Carline a definitely Holy Russia, the place from which a new religion would come, the great power which would save England from devouring Germany : the steam-roller. The war had made him take Russia more seriously than was in his capacity, and it was an intense relief to him when Sophina revealed her connection with the Russian Ballet.

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He could then slip back into the years before this war, and abandon the strained intensity which had been forced upon him by the removal of all the delightful institutions that had existed for his amusement. He would sigh and say :

"Oh, if they were only here now! I hate revues. I loathe rag-time."

And for Sophina, too, it was a serious matter. She had always hoped that somehow Ruth would be able to help her to find her way to solid ground; but Ruth had suddenly altered, had become reserved, guarded, almost indifferent, and refused to accompany her to Mr. Cherryman's or Mr. Carline's flat. At first she took it as rather a joke, and yet another proof of Carline's gullibility that he swallowed her story of the Russian Ballet, but it soon passed beyond that. . . . Cherryman had a pianola, and he insisted on her dancing when they went there, for they were, by his insistence, almost inseparable, and he treated her almost as if she were what she had desired to be to him. He bought her clothes, little trinkets, Russian, of course, paid her bills, and as the price of food went up, sent her parcels from Fortnum & Mason.

It was one night when she was dancing that the great idea came to her.

Why not ?

The idea grew apace, took possession of her. Why not ?

Surely any fool could learn to dance as well as the heavy-eyed women on the music-halls. Carline knew everybody. All his friends were working for various funds. She could begin by dancing to the soldiers, who had to put up with what they could get. A wonderful idea. She would do it. She would show that swine of a Finberg, she would show her father that a Jewish girl can make her way without her family and without being given by a match-maker to a man who covets her and her dowry. She would show them. Besides, she had begun to enjoy dancing. When she was successful and famous her father would forgive her. She knew that he had made money since the war,

and that, as so often happened among the Jews, a rich friend had remembered help given in his time of poverty.

She remained at the Ministry with Ruth, who was now working entirely for Trenham and not at all in connection with the rest of the department, and Ruth was always willing to do her work for her while she went away. She could find time then for lessons, and she practised early in the morning and late at night, not only at dancing but at the new personality she desired to assume. Sophie Dolgorova : she found the name in a book and she began in season and out to wear furs, for which Carline gladly paid. The only thing that amazed her was that she had not thought of it before. That was Finberg's fault, with his nonsense about pictures and poetry. The stage was the obvious thing for making money and conquering the West End. Even if you could paint pictures and write poetry, who cared? If you could sing or dance or act or even if you couldn't, you could appear at the Coliseum before almost the whole of the West End packed into one building.

Carline paid for her lessons, and when, after a few weeks she announced that she had recovered her form—ah! but it was terrible to remember the tortures she had undergone as a child—he arranged a party in Cherryman's rooms to which he invited Trenham, Ruth—who refused—several poets, a few actresses, several ladies of title and a number of young men in the Guards who had not yet made up their minds what branch of the Army best suited them and had stayed in London changing from one to the other. They had joined the Army in peace-time, and could not get accustomed to the idea of war, for they had never perceived the connection between the two. Cherryman invited more poets, several ladies of title, a novelist who had written several books about Russia in the Russian style, and, as an after-thought, Trevor Mathew, all that was left of the brilliant trio of pre-war days.

He wrote :

"My dear, of course it isn't a party. How could one

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in such times? It is just to meet a remarkable Russian dancer who is to appear for various charities. Do come, Love. . . . The poems are having an *enormous* sale in America."

Trevor, who had returned to London a few days before, decided to go. He wanted to ask Cherryman about the man and the girl in the motor-car. He told Cora that there were some old friends of his with whom he wished to resume contact for various reasons, primarily because they might be useful later on. Cora took that as a sign of grace in him, and thought he meant that he would introduce them to Mr. Angel so as to give him the entrée he desired to good society.

"Very well, darling," she said. "I'll find things to do, only don't be late."

"No. I won't be late. And by the way, Cora, my people are getting restive. You mustn't mind if I go up there for a few days."

"Oh! Must you?"

"It's only fair. I haven't been near them for months. I've hardly written to them. They don't even know that I've been ill."

"Very well," she said reluctantly. "I hate your being out of my sight."

"Afraid?"

"No. Only time flies so. The year will soon be up."

"Time enough to worry about that," he said, with a sudden twinge at the bottom of his spine. Sooner or later he would have to face his own world and give an account of himself. How, if Cora would not let him? She had changed greatly since his illness, loved him more, claimed more, gave more. He was beginning to be a little afraid, not so much of her as for her. Sometimes he wished he could hate her a little, but he had never been able to hate very well.

It was rather painful to him to go to Cherryman's flat. So many times had he climbed those stairs with Hardman and Peto in the days when they had run like frisky colts

through London. Even more painful was it when he entered the room again, for it was exactly the same. There still were the collected pictures, the collected books, the collected people, and there still was Cherryman obviously thinking :

"How happy I am ! How happy I am ! What delightful people."

And just as before Cherryman came towards him shifting his shoulders and wagging his hindquarters, and saying :

"Come in, my dear. . . . Isn't this delightful ? I'm so happy, though my conscience is weary. Still Dolgorov is anxious to dance for charity. She is a pupil of Karavina's. . . . I must introduce you."

The room was full of tobacco smoke, and it was too brilliantly lit, so that it was difficult for a moment or two to see people distinctly. Trevor found his hand gripped and heard a voice saying :

"Hello, Trevor, old man ! It's an age since I saw you. Where have you been ? "

"In London," said Trevor.

"Nonsense. You couldn't hide yourself in London. I bet you've been to Mesopotamia or Egypt or America with Northcliffe."

"No, no," said Trevor; but the young Guardsman, a friend of Peto's, insisted and decided in his own mind that Trevor had been to America, and was being mysterious and important about it.

"When are they coming in ? Ah ! You won't say. Well, it doesn't matter. We're all writing poetry now. My brother does it, so do I. We've published a book. It's frightfully easy. Isn't it queer that one should have had such an awful respect for it, but, of course, we don't rhyme nowadays."

Through the smoke Trevor saw the head of his stranger of the motor-car on the Brighton road. He turned away from his poet to Cherryman, and asked excitedly :

"Cherryman, who is that ? "

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"Oh! That's Carline's chief, Trenham. Do you want to know him?"

"No," answered Trevor. "No, I don't want to know him."

He was surprised at his own emphasis, but there was no doubt about it. He did not want to know Trenham, who, as it happened, was in a black mood, heartily, violently despising the people among whom he found himself. He had accepted because he thought Ruth would be going, as Sophina was her friend. So he looked sourly on, feeling that he was an old man, at the same time thanking God for it if this was youth. That it was not. He knew that. Ruth was youth, but nowhere could he find anything like her. The only person in the room who pleased him was Trevor, and of him he was blackly jealous because he too was young, graceful, handsome, easy, and had a forward look in his eyes. And suddenly he too remembered. It was the young man of the motor-car on the Brighton road, the huge, vulgar, silver-fitted car in which sat the large, handsome, expressionless-looking woman. That eased his jealousy and he thought: "Some actor!" and had the satisfaction of dismissing Trevor from his thoughts. Trevor, on the other hand, could not stop staring at him, resenting his own dislike, for Trenham stood out as a man of quality. However, he was soon engaged in conversation, passing from person to person, all of whom with a long face talked to him about Harry Hardman's poems. At last he reached Mlle. Dolgorova, and with the memory of his Jews still powerful upon him he knew her at once for what she was. He placed her mentally at once with Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga, and because of them felt for her an amused tolerance, almost an affection which increased into a real pleasure in her society when through her rather pretty foreign accent came the unmistakable thick Yiddish accent of Spital Square. (Trevor had heard a lot about that from Mr. Angel.)

He began politely:

"We miss your ballets, Mlle. Dolgorova. I thought

you were all in America. The Americans get the best of everything nowadays. I suppose they can pay for it."

"Aw naw," said Sophina. "I stay be'ind. Which Ministry are you in, Mr. Mathew?"

"I'm an invalid," said Trevor. "I have been spared. You must find England quite like Russia now with every one an official."

"Aw yaus," said Sophina. "Quait laike Russia, quait," and she nodded vehemently. She was not very comfortable with Trevor. He was not like Carline and Cherryman, and it was harder work keeping it up with him, but in another sense she was easier with him because, unlike the others, he observed and was interested in her real personality underneath her affectation. This was disconcerting, but she liked it. He was a challenge to her. The rest, she knew, would be pleased and charmed if a lead were given, as it would be by her patron. They could not be critical because she was Russian.

General conversation went on interminably because Cherryman was so convinced that everybody was happy that he could not bring himself to interrupt, and Sophina began to scowl and tap with her foot on the floor. She looked daggers at the other women, who were listening with bored politeness to the young men. Trevor, like Trenham, had given it up after a while, and the two of them, as chance would have it, stood apart in opposite corners, both glum and restive, yet neither daring to be so impolite as to go before the evening's entertainment had been given. At last Sophina went to Carline, and, in the extraordinary jargon which she had invented for his benefit, urged him to go to the pianola. Every one heard the word pianola with relief, and one end of the room was soon cleared. It was the end in which Trevor and Trenham were standing in opposite corners, and they gave it a certain theatrical form, the more so as they were unconscious of having been drawn into the show. Sophina, however, had perceived it at once and began to dance

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almost as soon as the first notes of Carnival were sounded, so as to give them no time to move.

"Ah! Carnival!" sighed some one in the audience settling down to remembered delights.

Sophina looked remarkably well. She had cut her hair short and it stood out in a bristling brush without ornament of any kind, and she was dressed in a modified ballet costume, the skirt of which came below her knees. She was not of a very pronounced Jewish type and might at a pinch have passed for an Italian or a Caucasian. Her Carnival was not bad, but a Columbine without a Harlequin is a little banal, and she did better with a trepak, in which her racial animal spirits could let themselves go. Everybody applauded, and she was wise enough to leave it at that. She was pressed by one or two of the women to dance at charity performances in which they were interested, and that was what she wanted.

Trevor thought the time had come to make his escape, but he was hemmed in, and to avoid being drawn into conversation again took up a little brown book with a futurist cover. It was called *London Poems*, by Siegmund Finberg, and he found himself mildly interested in them, chiefly because they brought back to him the days before the war when young men had screamed cacophonously for violence. Well, they had got it. How remote all that seemed! And how appropriate to this evening were the poems of S. Finberg. The whole evening struck him as a pathetic attempt to re-capture the life of pre-war days which could never come again. What was coming? Life could not stop still at Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga and Cora and the patriotic Henry Hobday.

Sophina, who for Carline's benefit had every now and then to play Dostoevskyish tricks, came up to him and snatched the book out of his hand and stood staring at him in defiance to create one of those Russian psychological moments for which Carline's soul craved, and it was more psychological than she had reckoned, for her

eyes fell on the hated word Finberg, and she was for second no longer the spoiled and petted dancer Dolgorova but the embittered and vindictive little Jewess. Trevor saw that, but no one else did, though everybody felt the things were somehow awkward. She dropped the book and Trevor picked it up with a graceful bow and a kind smile, and said :

"It is very bad poetry, Mademoiselle. Thank you."

"I'd like a drink," said Mlle. Dolgorova in unmistakable Whitechapel, and this also Trevor was the only one to notice, for Carline and Cherryman had begun to exclaim. "Isn't she wonderful? Ah! the Russians are unspoiled. They live! Such passion! Something barbaric and yet profoundly religious in the Russian soul!" And the phrases were echoed on every side.

Trenham was more struck with the ease with which Trevor turned the situation without humiliating Sophina and he had to alter his mind as to Trevor's being an actor but his jealousy remained and even increased. He felt resentfully that life had always been easy for the young man. He was used to London, could move happily in it, select instinctively, and had not to grope for what he wanted. And watching Trevor, wondering about him, relishing his qualities, his clean-cut face and figure, and his unmistakable charm, Trenham suffered agonies as his passion for Ruth Hobday broke through the enchantment in which it had hitherto lived and set him reeling as it poured through him and demanded contact with reality and to assert itself in terms of society and humanity. It was so sudden, so overpowering that Trenham's jaw dropped and his hand went to his throat, and he felt stifled in that atmosphere, in which there was no one who could feel who could understand what was happening to him, except Trevor. Against his will Trenham had to walk toward Trevor, who moved just at that moment, and escaped. Without saying good-night to his host or a word to Sophina, Trenham plunged after him.

"My chief looks out of sorts to-night," said Carline

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"Extraordinary how provincial some of these big men are. They can't get used to London."

"You see," said Cherryman, "they are used to being cock of the walk."

Trembling with an unreasonable rage, Trenham walked after Trevor, who had turned down to the Embankment Gate.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, as he caught him up at the Gate, "didn't I have the pleasure of meeting you on the Brighton road?"

"Good-night, gentlemen," said the gate-keeper, touching his hat.

Trevor stopped, and wondered why the question should be put so emotionally.

"Yes," he said. "I was glad we were able to help you out of your difficulty."

"My name is Trenham. I'm from the North, where we are a little more outspoken than you are here in London."

"So am I," answered Trevor. "I'm only here to read Law."

"Oh! I thought——"

"What?"

"I thought you were older."

"I have just been ill," said Trevor. "That may account for it. I was staying down at Brighton after a queer illness. I mean, I wasn't very ill, but the war got hold of me and did what it liked with me. It was every bit as bad as being recruited and swept out to France. I mean being left lying to find out some meaning in it all. It was like being squeezed slowly to death. . . . One isn't left out of it, you know. That is impossible."

"I don't know," said Trenham. "There are thousands who are. Look at my Ministry. It pays for the fine dinners they would have had if—if we hadn't all lost our heads. I confess I don't think about the war. I suppose in a way it has always been my job, getting ready for it and seeing it through. I'm paid to find out ways of killing

Carline.

people. I don't turn squeamish when the people who pay me begin to do it."

"I don't think about it either now," said Trevor, who had begun to like the big, gloomy man striding along by his side. "I still feel it as an enemy that may get me down at any moment. One isn't romantic any more, and what I feel is that the danger to be guarded against is not the killing of people—there are plenty left—but the moral suppuration which is poisoning the lives of those who remain. I don't know what to do about it. I don't know even that anything can be done."

"You're not like anybody else I've ever met," said Trenham, and his heart cried: "Except one."

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Trevor. "What would you do if you were offered the run of a million, and a park, and a newspaper, and a theatre? . . ."

"If I were young," said Trenham—"if I were young . . ."

But he lost the thread of his thought, so violent was his jealousy of Trevor. To be young! To be like Ruth! To have that quality of conscious courage which was like a new thing come into the world. . . . Ah! that was it. Conscious courage! If he had had it what would he not have done? He would never have been entrapped in the vast commercial organization which had gutted his brain and thwarted his passion for pure science, never have been caught in marriage, never have let his life trickle away up North. . . . If he were young now to face life with Ruth, if he were like this boy by his side who talked so easily of profundities, so unconsciously of truth, of things that had always been true, if only there had been time to recognize them. Time! Time! . . . If only Time would stop now! If only . . . But Trenham was not one to let himself be swept away by the desire for the miraculous.

"A million?"

"Yes," said Trevor. "All made since the war by a man whose profession used to be pawning clothes. He makes them now."

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"A million?" asked Trenham again. "Well, these are surprising times. To do as you like?"

"That's my trouble," said Trevor. "He is a Jew. I should be expected to make it earn a profit. On the other hand a Christian would not have made the offer. As far as I can make out my Jew wants to make a splash, but doesn't know how to, because he can't understand ideas or idealism. I should like to reform the newspapers, organize the book-market, force people to read just as they have been forced into the Army, bring the theatre up to date, and create all kinds of means by which the young could say what they liked. I would advertise good things just as the idiots who now run the bureaucracy advertise bad things. . . . It is all very chaotic at present in me, but I know the direction in which I should move. But it's an odd thing to happen to a man, isn't it?"

"It is what every young man dreams," answered Trenham. "If it happened I can understand that one would feel stunned. If it had happened to me when I was young I think I should have run away from it. I'm sure I should. The responsibility is too great except for a Jew or a fool who has no idea of what money might do."

They had walked along nearly to Westminster. Trenham thought of the night when Ruth had first come to see him. So much had happened since then to alter his life, to sift it and leave him with what was of worth and living enough to be handed on. . . . He wagged his head towards the Houses of Parliament, and said:

"Any thought of entering that place with your million?"

"It isn't mine yet," replied Trevor, "but I think not. It is out of date. I should want to invent new ways of doing things to stop the infernal reiteration that is going on. It makes one want to go to the Front to find quiet. Don't you think there is something in that? All the half-dozen ways of looking at things have been repeated so often that at last they have all become exactly alike. That is what I would like to stop. I sometimes think that if

one man really said what he thought and was correctly reported by the newspapers everything would become different. But no one can, because it has become impossible for anybody to think anything but what was thought a generation ago. That has been so stamped on our mind by repetition that we simply cannot understand each other if we try to talk individually and like men. . . . It is years since I talked to anybody as much as I have to you to-night; I used to get angry about it, but now it only strikes me as comic. People have got into uniform, and they accept that as the answer to all their problems. . . . I've been too ill, but I've bought a dog instead. One is forced to *do* something to avoid thinking."

They stopped under the Abbey. Trenham had been so interested in Trevor's eager talk that he had thought of inviting him to North Street to continue, but as they crossed Palace Yard Trevor had waved his hand toward Whitehall and said:

"That was where I saw you first. I was with Cherriman. . . . I find more and more that life is made up of little things acutely realized."

Trenham felt uneasy. The keen and living subtlety of Trevor was a thing to which he could not respond though he could recognize and appreciate it, and he was forced into asking himself whether these young people had not developed new powers with which to approach and explore life. He had often had a suspicion that this might have happened, but in Trevor there was no denying it. The only question that remained was, how far was he typical. . . . Ruth and Leslie were the same to a certain extent, young people working through their own intuition and bringing to the surface qualities that were almost unrecognizable. And if that were so, if the young had new powers, and if they had in them the desire to make life a new thing, how appalling was the responsibility of the older generation in forcing upon them a stereotyped course of conduct, and a fearful undertaking dominated by out-worn catch-words, phrases, dusty remnants

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ideas, and the hysterical self-hypnotism of demagogues. . . . But if that was so why did the young so patiently accept it? Why did they just shrug at the ruin of a continent? What faith had they to sustain them and to make them so indifferently allow such misery? . . . Trenham felt sure that Trevor could give some sort of answer to these questions, but because of Ruth he could not bear to ask him more. He had found in Trevor the clue to more than one mystery in Ruth, and he was afraid.

They stood for some time rather awkwardly, both puzzled and a little hurt by the barrier that stood between them because they respected each other, and had both gained a great deal.

"I've enjoyed talking to you," said Trevor, "because you don't belong to a mob big or little." He laughed. "You were the only man in that room besides myself, who smelt the Jewess in Carline's Russian."

Trenham gave a deep chuckle as he answered:

"Carline is my secretary and Miss Lipinsky works at my Ministry. I hope I haven't brought you too far out of your way."

"Oh no," said Trevor. "I live in Shaftesbury Avenue. It's convenient."

Trenham's thoughts floated to the woman in the silver-fitted car. Shaftesbury Avenue placed her, but only added to his perplexity about this modern young man. It was scarcely credible to him that Trevor could be enamoured of such a woman, but because he wanted to believe it he believed it, knowing at the same time he was doing a thing of which his young friend was incapable. Watching him walk away he thought:

"He walks differently too. He walks as though he were beautifully dressed, and as though he were certain of his quality, and as though he were certain that circumstances will adapt themselves to him. . . . But that is not new. . . . Damn it all. I've caught his habit of thinking about people and trying to find out what they really are."

And Trevor too had been moved by this encounter which had removed the last vestiges of his old habit of thinking that what he did in London did not matter, his real life was waiting for him up North, a position in which he could easily slide, family interests and ties which would quickly absorb him and make him "safe." He was recognizing slowly that this was the very last thing he wished to be, and his insight had seen in Trenham the type of successful Northerner he might become, superior certainly, but still provincial and awkward, intolerant and reserved and suspicious. . . . With Cora he had fallen into the habit of living for the moment and of not thinking of the rest of his year, but Trenham, redolent of the North had brought him back to it with a crash.

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XVII

HENRY HOBDAY PROTESTS

AFTER the visit to Brighton it was some weeks before Trevor returned to the office. He could not bring himself to make the customary journey, because the office seemed to him a part of a life that was dead: not only his personal life, but everything, everything that surrounded it, domestic habits first and strongest of all, then education, then religion. All had become so remote that it was clear and distinct, and unreal, so that he gazed at it with an affectionate tolerance, and thought of it as an old man thinks of his childhood, forgetting suffering and pain and remembering moments of eagerness, and all the more easily because it was so certainly ended that nothing out of it could arise and insist on being dealt with. Trevor had exactly that comfortable sense about it, that the old world in which he had been so fortunately placed, was dead. Nothing remained of it, not even its ideas, which had been so frayed and so weakly that they could not keep pace with the practice of life, so that for a time men had to live horribly without ideas. . . . People went on prattling about Socialism and Fabianism and bureaucracy and democracy, but what they said was continually mocked by events. Military experts, financial experts, social experts, all prognosticated and all were wrong, ironically and laughably, and the moulding of opinion remained in their hands, and simple people like Mr. Henry Hobday believed them all invariably from day to day. Therefore Trevor, who knew that the world according to Henry Hobday was dead, could not bear to go near him or any

of his works. The only thing that attracted him was a big African case, through which he hoped to find out more of the early life and adventures of Mr. Ysnaga, and it was not until he remembered how disconcerted that remarkable individual had been at the mention of Mr. Barnes Hobdays that at length he was able to conquer his aversion and resume his activities as an articled clerk, for which in his heart, he knew that he was too grown-up. . . . That was it! He had grown up, and the world of Hobday had been, and was still, a world of credulous children. His intolerance vanished, and he was able to walk as usual down to Charing Cross Station, buy a *Daily News* and a *Daily Mail*, and travel by District train to the Mansel House, from which he had only three minutes' walk.

The clerks smiled as he entered the outer office, and the cashier said:

"Good morning, Mr. Mathew. Well, you *are* a stranger."

"I feel it," answered Trevor, with his pleasant smile which made the new office-boy dart to open the door for him.

"Thank you," said Trevor, turning into the dark passage leading to the room dedicated to the partners. He almost bumped into Mr. Henry Hobday, and said:

"O! I beg your pardon. Good morning."

"Trevor!" said the head of the firm in a deep, severe voice. "Trevor! I wish to see you in my room at once. I shall be back in a moment."

Trevor went through the door on which was written "Mr. Henry Hobday," and waited, remembering the alarm with which on previous occasions he had stood there. He was foolish! There was nothing to be alarmed about. The old man simply did not know what he was talking about and was as ignorant of life as a schoolboy or a monk, but it was precisely that which had been so terrifying. Such dictatorial confidence had come out of that bland imperturbable ignorance which not even the war had shaken. Mr. Henry Hobday was a success in a world of failure, now for years dedicated to failure in a calamity so vast

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that it almost dubbed the universe a failure, but served, after all, to emphasize the success of Mr. Henry Hobday. . . . That had been terrifying to Trevor, but it was so no longer. He was in a position of experience and suffering to confirm what he had said to Mr. Henry Hobday on a memorable occasion.

The head of the firm came slowly, treading the dark passage; every step heavily underlined a painful thought, a carefully pondered censorious phrase; he entered the room with the deliberation of a captive hippopotamus, sinking into its tank, and Trevor thought of himself as a sodden bun floating on the water which would presently be swallowed down with several gallons of the greenish liquid which was the monster's native element. Mr. Hobday sank more and more slowly into his chair until his hindquarters imperceptibly and almost voluptuously touched and sank into the Russian leather of his arm-chair. Then in a rumbling, sonorous voice he said:

"Trevor, I have received a most unhappy letter from your mother, and I wish to speak to you as man to man."

"Wait a moment," said Trevor. "Why should my mother write to you?"

Mr. Hobday looked amazed. This conversation was being directed, very seriously, by himself. He was not prepared for questions. He just raised his eyebrows with the expression which had put the fear of God and the firm into a generation of clerks, and as Trevor was silent he assumed that it had had the desired effect, whereas Trevor was merely taking a detached interest in the working of the mechanism of this phenomenon which he had once almost revered. What absorbed him was the obvious fact that Mr. Hobday was acting purely out of habit and without any personal feeling whatever. His mouth opened mechanically, words came out of it like tin-cans out of a machine. They clattered almost metallicly. He said:

"Trevor, only my regard for your father and mother makes me speak. I know, we all realize that times are not normal, and if you were in the Army of course no one

would say a word. . . . I refer to the manner of living you have chosen. . . . I should have thought that as you had been spared you would have set an example to those who, after a victorious conclusion of the war, will return."

"That," thought Trevor, with a twinkle in his eye, "is precisely what I want to do."

"Your private life is, of course, your own. . . . I am speaking for your father's sake. Let me come to the point. You are living openly, flagrantly, with a notorious woman of the town. I have heard my clerks sniggering about it. . . ."

"I happen to live," said Trevor acidly, "in the flat opposite a very charming woman who has been extremely good to me during my illness."

"That is your account of it."

"Certainly. That is all that anybody is entitled to know or to discuss about me."

Mr. Hobday blinked. This was not in order. It was not the proper move in response to his.

"But what is one to think?" he asked.

"Why think anything? It is of no interest to any one but myself."

"And your mother . . . ?"

"Please keep my mother out of it, Mr. Hobday."

"But I am speaking on her behalf . . ."

"I decline to hear you."

Mr. Hobday rose slowly from his Russian leather chair and laid a fat hand on his desk, and leaned ponderously forward:

"Trevor, I implore you to abandon this unseemly levity. I can understand a young man's temptations. But there is a vast difference between yielding to temptation and courting ruin. . . . Once let a woman of that class get a hold on you and she will never let you go. . . . And I implore you to think of the example. You're a young man with responsibilities, with wealth, position, an honoured name. We are living in times when, owing to a variety of causes, the lower classes are showing signs

of being extremely restive. What will they want to do if young men with your privileges set them such an example? . . . I ask you is this—is this a proper preparation for the life you will have to live?"

"Yes, said Trevor, with his frankest and most boyish smile. "I assure you, Mr. Hobday, I loathe visionaries as vehemently as you. And if I were vicious I should necessarily be hypocritical. I am neither the one nor the other, and I decline to discuss the matter any further."

Again Mr. Hobday sank slowly into his chair, and again his hindquarters caressed the familiar Russian leather. On the whole he felt safer sitting down. He thought for some moments, then slowly opened the drawer and took out a letter.

"I am deeply pained," he said. "To justify myself I must ask you if you would mind reading your mother's letter. I am a father myself, or perhaps I should not have been so moved."

"Very well," said Trevor, taking the letter as it was held out to him.

DEAR MR. HOBDAY,

Your news of Trevor, which my husband has given me, has pained me more than I can say. We had not heard from him for some time, and were naturally anxious, and your letter came like a bomb-shell. We did not even know he had been ill, though his trustee had given my husband a hint that he was spending a great deal of money. I always dreaded his going to London. There are such dangerous people there. I know Trevor would *never* marry without bringing his bride to me, and that he has said nothing about it is the most reassuring thing left to me in my grief. I know you will be kind to him, dear Mr. Hobday, and help him in every way. We are glad he has been with you these years, and are looking forward to his return, though it goes to my heart when I think of the other mothers whose sons, good sons and bad sons, and the bad sons are perhaps the dearest, have gone and will not return.

Yours sincerely,

ELINOR MATHEW.

Trevor gulped and tears came to his eyes. What was the old fool talking about? There was nothing to be said,

and how dared he attempt to interfere between mother and son? For Trevor the one clear meaning of the letter was that his mother trusted him. She had had the tale of his doings twisted, distorted, and made horrible by this old man, and she trusted him, and that the old man could not see because he trusted nothing and nobody, and he offered this letter, so vital, so important to Trevor as justification for his own impertinence, but because of the letter Trevor could not be angry with him. The man, after the fashion of his kind, had simply judged without knowledge of the persons and the circumstances. He misunderstood Trevor's silence, and thought it safe to observe:

"I could not feel it more if you were my own son."

"I have nothing to say," replied Trevor, reluctantly handing the letter back. He longed to keep it, so precious was its humanity to him in its healing, vivifying power.

"Why," he thought, "that is just what we are all after. Trust!"

"Come, come," said the head of the firm, assuming a man-of-the-world manner. "As one man to another, don't you see that certain rules of conduct must be observed. Of course I understand what London is like, especially in wartime. No doubt the lady is charming, but why let anybody know? . . ."

"If you don't mind, we won't discuss it any more. Thank you for letting me see my mother's letter. If I had done anything of which I should be ashamed to tell her, you could rest assured that I should not be here in your office. . . . If you don't mind, we won't talk about it any more."

"I'm only asking you to see reason," protested Mr. Henry Hobday, now not at all comfortable in his rôle of man of the world, to which Trevor had made no response whatever. "A scrape is a scrape, and every young man has to be warned some time or other. . . . Come, come, you've had your good time, suppose you think of others for once in a way. Once you get mixed up with people of that kind there is no knowing where it may end. . . . Suppose this lady should insist on your marrying her?"

"I might do worse," said Trevor, out of pure mischief. The idea of marriage had never entered his head.

Mr. Hobday bounced out of his chair.

"You fool! You young fool! Can't you see the risks you are running, not to speak of the opportunities you are throwing away. If I were in your position, with the luck to be left at home while other young men were facing death and terror abroad, I should be making a full use of my time, getting to know people, working out my career, making myself useful to the people in the swim . . ."

"It may interest you to know," said Trevor, "that I have already been offered the use of a million to do as I like."

"A . . . a million!" Mr. Hobday's jaw dropped.

"It is not quite a million yet, but it will be if the war goes on another year. I am to help to spend it."

Mr. Hobday sank into his chair again, and after a long silence he said archly:

"Ah! So you haven't been wasting your time, then. Quite a romance!" His eyes twitched as he thought of the letter he had written to Trevor's mother. "Heigh! So you are out for the big game for all your quietness, and there was something in the brilliant reports we had of you at Cambridge. Of course we can't give dinner-parties nowadays. . . ."

("Thank God," thought Trevor, who had suffered at the Hobday dinners.)

". . . but if you are free any evening."

"I'm afraid I am not often free," said Trevor. "And, if you don't mind, I want to write to my mother, and it would help me if you would let me have her letter to you."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," said Mr. Hobday, staring in credulous amazement at this mysterious young man who had plunged into London life and come up with a million in his hands, and he handed him his precious letter. Trevor put it in his pocket-book and said:

"Is that all?"

"It is a load off my mind."

Trevor smiled. If he had a million he might be responsible for all the tenants of the flats in Shaftesbury Avenue, and he would be approved. The word had been enough to relax the stern morality which had confronted him on his entry to the sanctum that derived its air of stolidity from the Law Reports which lined its walls.

"I have been hasty," said Mr. Hobday, who by now was beginning to be angry with himself. "I—I was only anxious about your health. Do be careful of yourself, dear boy. Your frankness has put my mind at rest, entirely at rest. It has been my unfortunate experience that ah!—people so rarely tell the truth about themselves."

With his mother's letter in his pocket-book, Trevor could not feel angry. He was elated and buoyed up.

"That's all right," he said. "We're growing up, you know."

"Eh?"

Trevor repeated his remark, but its meaning did not penetrate Mr. Hobday's mind, which was reeling under the idea of a million pounds. He held out his fat hand, and Trevor shook it, though its contact was unpleasant to him, for it felt like a bag of flour.

Still elated he strolled through to see Mr. Barnes to find out how the African case was getting on, and in the outer office he was amazed to see the girl in the grey dress whom he had seen twice before, once in the motor on the Brighton road, and once at the corner of Whitehall. She was in some distress, and she winced almost imperceptibly when she saw him, for she recognized him without being able to place him, though she remembered him as the young man she had met twice before, the young man whom, in the old Highgate days, she had taken as a model for Leslie. He stopped involuntarily to stare at her, gave her a bow of silent apology, and passed on. . . . She, too, would be like his mother. She, too, would trust absolutely.

As he reached Mr. Barnes' room, he remembered Trenham—Trenham and that girl! Cora had said: "Some City man and his typist!" Impossible! . . . Mr. Barnes was

out. The heap of papers in the room had grown higher. Those on which he had been working had not been touched and were thick with dust. . . . Trenham and the girl in grey! . . . He sat down, dusted his papers, but was restless, wanted to smoke, and remembered that he had left his pipe in Mr. Robert's room.

As he passed through the general office he asked the cashier who the young lady was. The clerks tittered and winked at each other, for Trevor's newly acquired reputation was a delight to them.

"That's Mr. Hobbday's niece," said the cashier. "Daughter of his mad brother Charles, who refused to enter the firm. She used to come here fairly often before the war, but she hasn't been lately."

"Thanks," said Trevor, and as he passed through the door leading to the partners' rooms there was an audible titter. He went into his own room, got his pipe, and was just coming out when through the half-open door of Mr. Hobbday's room he heard the rumbling voice saying in the tone of a political speech:

"I am proud of the boy! Proud of him! And I am astonished that you, his sister, should come here with such a request."

"But he is only just seventeen."

Ruth's voice! Trevor was thrilled by it, glad of it. For the pleasure of hearing it he could not move away, but stood in his doorway absently filling his pipe.

"He is only seventeen! He is not old enough to understand! He only went, I am sure of it—because he was so wretched at school. . . . He is a clever boy, and so sensitive, too sensitive. He complained that all the spirit had gone out of the school. There were only old men and parsons left. All the young masters had gone. . . . I tell you, uncle, he feels more than ordinary people. Young people are more sensitive nowadays, and he looks so young. They ought never to have taken him."

"Come, come," replied Mr. Hobbday. "Suppose all the sisters and wives and mothers had behaved like this

in the old voluntary days, where should we be now? Of course he wants to fight for his beautiful sister. You should be proud of him. I am. I am as proud of him as if he were a son of my own. . . . I will see that he has money and cigarettes. . . ."

"Be quiet," said Ruth. "You don't know what you're talking about. I want you to help me to get him out. They have no right to keep him. . . . It was a sudden impulse. I know he is horrified now at what he has done. It was something! But you don't understand, you don't understand. . . ."

"If he is over-sensitive," said Mr. Hobday, "the Army will make a man of him, and the sooner the better, as he will have to make his own way in the world."

"I must tell you," said Ruth, in a cool, deliberate tone. "There was a terrible quarrel at home. Leslie has never understood father, and father is a little difficult. But for that you are to blame. . . ."

"I?"

Trevor slipped back into his own room and stood quivering. He could still hear their voices, but not what they said: his booming and foolish; hers quiet, strong, purposeful.

Ruth said:

"Yes; you should either have helped father properly to do what he wanted to do, or you should have left him alone. You wanted to humiliate him and you did, but you humiliated us too. What had we done to you, we children? . . . You helped to make us poor, and then were ashamed of us because we were poor. You had provided for us! Two hundred a year and a parcel of old clothes at Christmas! You wanted to break my father's dreams and my mother's pride. You did neither, and you never had the feeling to think how lonely and helpless we were. . . . And that told on us. The weight of it fell on me first and then on Leslie. . . . It has made him what you would call queer, sudden unaccountable plunges, strange fantastic moods, and a terrible, terrible knowledge. . . . You never helped us then. You won't help us now,

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and so I must tell you what you are and what you have done!"

Her uncle smiled deprecatingly:

"You are still only a child."

"I have worked for my living since I was sixteen. I am a woman now, and women are beginning to understand what it means to trust to old men who have forgotten how youth can suffer . . ."

Mr. Hobday's smile widened, and he said very indulgently:

"In wartime we are none of us quite normal. I can well understand a high-spirited boy not willing to wait until he is a conscript. There is stuff in the Hobdays. You should be proud of him, my dear. He is quite safe until he is nineteen, and the life will be the making of him. Indeed, I am so pleased with him that I am prepared when the war is over to send him to Oxford or Cambridge, and to treat him as if he were my own son, and to give him in this office the place that would have been his by right if his father had entered the firm." He beamed with pleasure in his own generosity, and Ruth, acknowledging it as such, was put to some confusion for a moment or two.

"That is beside the point," she said. "Leslie isn't an ordinary boy. It is very good of you to offer all that, but I don't think any of the young people want to accept life ready-made any more. . . . I have been thinking it over, and I believe that it must have been in my father's mind too when he refused to do as *his* father wished, and it is stronger and more articulate in us. I simply don't want Leslie to waste the next few years."

"Waste!" exclaimed Mr. Hobday. "Waste! In the service of his country! He is in khaki!"

Ruth saw that her uncle's prejudice was impenetrable. It had been drilled into his mind that the sole duty of the young was to accept regimentation in silence, and Ruth's protest, mild though it was, had offended him almost as a breach of manners. His *Morning Post* that day had told him to believe that every fit man must be forced out of civilian employment, and for the day that was his thought

on the affairs of the nation. It had been a source of some uneasiness to him that he had no son to give to the cause and he was very pleased, in his strangely-working heart, that his nephew had so pluckily made the great sacrifice before he was asked of him. He said kindly :

"I know it must be in some ways a disappointment to you, Ruth. You have been very brave and you have done very well, but we must all suffer if we are to maintain our supremacy."

Ruth was beginning to feel irritable at his constantly falling back on newspaper phrases. Life had become very real to her lately, and rather difficult, and Leslie's sudden departure had made her feel very acutely that the future was in danger, that nothing was being done to safeguard it, and that the younger generation, gagged and unable to utter a word, had been betrayed. Their hopes and dreams were at the mercy of innumerable little tyrants of whom Mr. Henry Hobday was the type most near to her and most powerful in her own affairs. It was somehow degrading to receive a favour, even justice, at his hands.

"Very well, uncle," she said. "That is the last thing I shall ask of you. . . . I have had to be obliged to you all my life. I used to believe the fault was my father's, but—don't let us open old quarrels."

She opened her purse and took out the half-yearly cheque made out to her father and handed it over the wide desk. Mr. Hobday took it up suspiciously, glanced at it, and gasped.

"There has never been an opportunity before," she said. "In time the whole amount shall be refunded. . . . Good morning."

Mr. Hobday could find not a word to say. Really! What was the world coming to? . . . The whole morning had been wasted in dealing with rebellious youngsters. With extraordinary rapidity thoughts flooded through his slow brain: A million—Ruth—Marriage. . . . And he remembered that young women were apt to grow fractious and unsettled as their marriage-time approached.

... And then he was almost honest enough to realize that he wanted that million in the Hobday family. . . .

"Absurd!" he said. "My brother . . . your father is entitled to that as a member of the family. It was my father's wish. . . . However, as you please. . . . It can accumulate for the children and can go into War Bonds."

For a moment he was held back by jealousy. All attempts to interest Trevor in his own daughters had failed lamentably, and it was just like the irony of things that the idiotic Charles's daughter should be a beauty. However, he conquered that and repeated: "One moment." He heaved out of his chair and out of the room, and by the time he was in the passage had persuaded himself that he was willing to risk even his niece in the fulfilment of his duty towards Trevor's father and mother. The best tonic for a young man engaged in sowing his wild oats was an encounter with a pure young girl. He opened Mr. Robert Treves' door and said:

"Trevor, can you spare me one moment?"

"Any number," said Trevor genially.

"I—ah!—want to introduce you to my niece, Ruth."

Trevor was in the passage in one stride, across it, and in Mr. Hobday's room before the eminent lawyer had swung round like a battleship on the turn of the tide, and by the time he reached his room Ruth and Trevor were shaking hands and smiling at each other in recognition. . . . Mr. Hobday pulled his nose, and said peevishly:

"You ought to have waited for me to introduce you."

"We have heaps of friends in common," said Trevor.

"It was only a question of time. We were bound to meet."

"I am very glad," murmured Ruth, with a half-frightened glance behind her. "Very glad. But I must be going now, back to my Ministry, you know."

"Are you in the same Ministry as Cherryman?" asked Trevor.

"No, but a friend of his, Mr. Carline, is immediately above me."

"And Mademoiselle Dolgorova?"

"Who?"

"Carline's Russian."

Ruth laughed. "O! Sophina! She is my assistant."

"May I suggest," said Mr. Hobday benevolently—after all he only wanted to be benevolent—"that if you wish to discuss your friends you should go out to lunch now."

"Will you?" asked Trevor, and Ruth nodded. They left the pillar of Society rubbing his hands and smiling to himself. . . . Yes, that was the way to handle these young people. Give them love's young dream, and they would leave serious matters to their elders and stop fretting over things that lay beyond their understanding. . . .

Both Ruth and Trevor were very far from love's young dream as understood by Mr. Henry Hobday. They were simply delighted to meet as people who could understand each other. Both knew at once that they spoke the same inward language, and they were only amused when, as they closed the outer door, they heard the cashier say:

"Quick work!"

"I can't believe it," said Trevor, as they walked down the stone steps. "I can't believe that you are his niece."

"Nor can I," answered Ruth. "But my father's name is the same, and we were always taught that the world existed for the Hobdays. I am sure my uncle believes that the war is being fought to protect them."

"Where would you like to lunch? I feel that we have a great deal to talk about: and a lot of time to make up."

"I . . . I don't think I ought to stay. . . . I have missed a whole morning's work. I have never done such a thing before, but I had bad news this morning about my brother. He didn't come home last night, and this morning I heard that he had joined the Army."

"Oh!" Trevor was keenly alive to her distress. "One forgets that that is going on all the time, but one ought not to forget it. The married men and the older men make a fuss, but the boys are going all the time without a word."

"Straight from school, without having lived," said Ruth. "And my brother has gone before his time."

Trevor took her to an old City chop-house in which were seated old types of City clerks and merchants, who stared indifferently, with a faint shade of resentment at the handsome young couple who intruded upon their mustiness flavoured with a thick stale odour of cooking and sawdust soaked in beer. At the very top of the house was a Ladies' Room, which they had to themselves. It was so still and quiet that it was obvious that no one had entered it for many days, and it was some minutes before a breathless and astonished waiter arrived to attend them. Trevor ordered chops, apple pudding, and a small bottle of claret.

"It was amazing luck," he said. "I had not been near the office for weeks. There are times when I can't stand it. I mean, the ruin going on all round, and old Hobday—beg pardon, your uncle—doing better and better. I can't stand it. If he has to pay more, he makes more, and a reduced staff doesn't seem to make any difference to him."

He was not particularly interested in Mr. Hobday, but he had to say something if only to distract her attention from the new pleasure he had in looking at her. Her throat and her lips especially fascinated him, while her voice moved him almost intolerably, and every now and then he had to gasp from the novel sensation of breathing in her presence pure air. This sensation was accentuated by the stuffiness of the chop-house.

From the windows they looked into a narrow city street, and through the windows opposite they could see men and girls working at ledgers, files, rotary machines, typewriting, and machines for addressing envelopes.

"The city isn't new to me," said Ruth. "I worked for years as a typist."

That knocked at Trevor's heart: he had been trying to pretend that it was not she whom he had seen on the Brighton road. She had not seen him on that occasion.

"Oh!" he said, a little crestfallen. "Did you like it?"

"Hardly. But we were desperately poor. My father had a mania for chemistry, and before the war that was a terrible thing to have."

The waiter brought their chops and fried potatoes.

"Still," she said. "I'm glad I worked. It was a good preparation for what I am doing now—quite important work, if war-work is important. You're not against the war, are you?"

"One might as well be agair an earthquake," answered Trevor. "I hate the waste, and I hate the use of public powers for private profit. When I've said that I've said all I have to say about the war. . . . I want to talk about you. I saw you once when I was with Cherryman. You were wearing a grey dress with a pink rose. . . . Your brother was with you, too."

Again Ruth looked behind her with a half-frightened expression in her candid eyes that could conceal nothing and counterfeit nothing.

"Are you afraid for your brother? You needn't be. If he is under age you can insist on their letting him go."

"That is why I went to see my uncle this morning. My father can't, and my uncle won't, do anything. You see, they are both Hobdays and obstinate. That is why I don't think the war will ever stop, because England is full of Hobdays who won't go either forward or backward, and think that once a thing has happened it is unalterable and somehow sanctified. Once a thing is definite, then they don't want it changed. . . . I think they are very simple-minded. . . . One gets into the habit of thinking of them as 'they'—as though they were children or animals, and as though nothing that they did was binding on us."

"That's just it," said Trevor. "It isn't. . . . I say, you are thinking the same things as I am. It doesn't matter what they do, because they can't bind us. I mean, when they think materially we think spiritually, so that

the same things, the same words, have different meanings for us. That's true, isn't it?"

She nodded, her cheeks rosy with excitement, and her eyes bade him continue.

"They haven't risen to the occasion, and we have. That's why we say nothing. We know that we are going to begin all over again, and so we want them to ruin and smash what they have built up so carefully. We let them do it even if it kills us, and we don't mind. We don't even think or talk of revolution, because we know that the revolution has happened in our souls. We believe in each other and not in things any more. We are going to live through each other and not through things and property and external values. . . . I haven't been able to talk about it to any one before, but I can to you, because I've had something splendid from my mother. . . . You must meet my mother. She always let me do whatever I wanted to do, even if at first sight it looked wrong. . . . You know we're all sick to death of doing easy things and possible things. We want to try for the unattainable, and to dig things out of ourselves instead of mopping up everything we see like puppies. . . . Am I boring you? I'm so excited."

"No, no," said Ruth. "Go on. Do go on. It has happened. I know it has happened. That is why it is so exhausting until the diplomatists make up their minds that they must do what the financiers tell them. We want to get on with the things that matter."

"The only things that matter," interrupted Trevor, "are people—real people."

"My brother," said Ruth. "That is why I mind so terribly. He would have been one of your people. . . . All the boys and girls have it in them. They all want to understand each other."

"You're not drinking anything. Suppose we drink a toast: 'To the young people and the revolution in their souls' . . . Pink roses!"

"Why did you say that?" asked Ruth.

"Some day I'll tell you. . . . I mean little, tight rose-buds, like the one you were wearing that day in Whitehall."

Ruth looked out of the window and a troubled expression crossed her eyes.

"I know that what you say is true. . . . It makes one long for everybody to stop talking. Then we could hear only the guns. They would soon die down if we were allowed to hear them. . . . And then I should like silence for a long time, and after that to hear faintly the new song breaking like the dawn."

"I think it will happen like that," said Trevor simply. "The fools will go on talking—Leagues of Nations, Socialism, Imperialism, Social Revolution, but we shan't hear them. We shall be listening for that which will silence even the fools. . . . Nothing else matters."

Ruth turned her eyes full on him, and said:

"I am glad that you are free."

"And I am glad that you are," he replied.

And that is how people win their freedom, by acknowledging it in each other.

They sat on in silence, there was no frothiness in either of them. The word "Love" never entered their minds. They were not even conscious of each other as man and woman, but only as human beings. . . . It was delightfully appropriate that this, their first taste of the new intercourse that had become possible should have been given to them in an old musty eating-house in the very heart of the world's largest market-place.

"What will you be?" asked Ruth.

"What should I be except myself?" asked Trevor, and she felt that she was rebuked, and was even so both ashamed of and annoyed with herself.

"I sometimes think," he said, "that the war is the old men's odd way of acknowledging the spiritual revolution. They wanted to give it material expression. No wonder they are in a mess and can't realize it. You see, they haven't a clue, and we have."

"Thank you. You are very fortunate."

"How?"

"You can find words."

He grinned mischievously.

"That's my danger," he said. "I am always apt to talk too much."

"But you don't. . . . You haven't. . . . I didn't mean that."

"I know you didn't. . . . Can I help you on with your coat? . . . I've come to an end of my capacity for idleness, and I must go back to work."

"Can you bear a lawyer's office?"

"I am going to spend my life in one. . . . May I write and arrange another meeting?"

"Please. . . . Only not very soon. . . ."

He understood her. She wanted to take stock of her life, even as he did.

To their amazement they found when they reached the ground floor that it was after half-past four.

Trevor laughed, and said:

"So much for my desire to work. I shall just be in time for tea at the office."

"So will I," said Ruth. "I shall be in time for Sophina's third tea. . . . Good-bye. Thank you so much."

He helped her to mount a 'bus and stood by the Mansion House watching it as it moved away into the gathering grey twilight that filled Queen Victoria Street. He was aflame with joy, and it seemed to him that soon, very soon, light must begin to break, and the familiar scene, sordid in its pompous heaviness—the City of London, indolent in its wealth—must be illumined and transfigured. He was so quick with joy that even his idealism seemed a joke to him, a spirit that moved in him as easily and with as living a force as the blood in his veins.

XVIII

RUTH AND TRENHAM

As she was carried westward through the grey London light Ruth could laugh at the unreasoning impulse which had made her go to her uncle to ask him to sympathize and help her with her overpowering desire to save her brother from the holocaust. It was foolish of her. How could her uncle sympathize? For him the war was a thing that had happened, an end in itself, an answer to all questions, religious, political, social. For him the donning of uniform was a symbol of noble acquiescence which was indubitably right. To admit the possibility of another point of view would be for him to admit the possibility of doubt, and an act of blasphemy. He had ascribed her desire to save Leslie to womanish weakness and had been indulgently kind about it. That was as far as he could go. The war was to him something which the younger generation could not even begin to understand because they had to deal with facts while he lived in serene enjoyment of its splendid fictions. They had to follow it through all its phases while his mind remained in the intoxication of the first few weeks working with the idea proper to the campaigns in the Transvaal, Afghanistan and even the Crimea. Reiteration which made the young increasingly incredulous glued him up in his inappropriate notions. The misunderstanding was complete.

Ruth had suffered from it in other directions, but she had never clarified it until her few hours of complete understanding with Trevor. He had forced her to admit her own thoughts and to realize the tension in which she lived

as day by day, minute by minute, her desire for life in accordance with what she believed was thwarted by the general activity as to the validity of which she was profoundly sceptical. . . . How dull the streets had become! The Colonial soldiers sauntering up and down the Strand filled her with pity, so lost they looked, so innocently bewildered, though in that they were like everybody else, except that they were bewildered without suffering, whereas the Londoners showed in their faces the strain, the almost painful dull anger as the face of their city was changed and their hospitality was put to an intolerable test. . . . Ruth could remember the warm immoderate generosity with which the Belgian refugees had been welcomed, but after them had come the deluge, from the provinces and all parts of the world until London was no more and its old habits were swept away and it had become only a kind of clearing-house, and Ruth, like a good Londoner, resented the loss of dignity in the great city. The astonishing events of this great day in her life made her aware of that resentment, and also revealed to her how narrow and circumspect her existence had become, how hopeless, and without thought for the future. Her brother's plunge had been the last straw. She had clung to him as the being through whom the slow havoc of the present would be repaired, and when he was taken from her she had been overcome by despair. She could no longer pretend. Her life, like millions of other lives, was thwarted, and it was only an aggravation to know that she was one of millions. The calm gaiety, the affected air of efficiency in which other women took refuge were impossible for her. In them she could find no fulfilment, and that for her was essential. . . . And then suddenly, in her uncle's office of all places, she had understood and been understood by another human being, and she knew that she had been wrong to chafe against the phantasmagoria of the war. That would pass as the old ideas passed, and there would be life again on the terms of those who had the courage and the patience not to surrender. So great was the relief

of her experience that she had no detailed memory of Trevor or of anything that he had said. The shock of the delight had been as great as the shock of tragic news, and it had left her almost dazed mind without control of the emotions and impressions which for many many months had lain dormant in her and now suddenly forced their way out. And as the minutes went by her condition became only the more painful. As she reached the Ministry and entered it, she began to watch herself critically and a little contemptuous as the Ruth Hobday who had been, the egoistic, confident, obdurate young woman who had a confirmed and vicious habit of managing and of making others live and act according to herself, by virtue of her own strength of personality, and her own fixed will. . . . A fine triumph that, to have forced her way up out of suburban, poor gentility into a position of some confidence and power in this new society of genteel persons which had gathered round the War Government.

As she had foretold, she found Sophina making her third tea. Sophina looked at her crossly, and said :

"I do think you might have let us know you weren't coming. Sir Seymour has been pacing in and out like a caged puma all day long. . . . I've done my best, but you know I can't read your shorthand, and you and he have your own ways."

"I'm sorry," said Ruth, taking off her hat. "I had to go to the City. I've had bad news. My brother has gone into the Army."

"I shouldn't worry about that," said Sophina. "The war's going to be over soon. Down in the East End there's great goings-on. They say Russia's out of the war and there's going to be a Revolution. . . . Oh ! I wish I could be in it."

Ruth could not help smiling. Sophina by now took her Russian history quite seriously.

"It's a bit thick, though," said Sophina, glad to chatter, for she had been alone nearly all day, "the way they take

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every one into the Army but those who ought to go. I could tell you of East End Jews. . . ."

"No, no," said Ruth.

"Yes, I could. I could tell you what they do to themselves to get out of it. It's only in this country that they take conscription so seriously. The people who live in Russia and Germany and France know all about it. If I'd known about your brother I could have . . ."

"Please stop!" cried Ruth. "My brother has gone of his own accord."

"Well, I never!"

"It has made me hate the war so that I don't think I can even stay here."

"Oh, don't be a mug! What about the girls who've only been married for a week? . . . Be sensible. Nobody's left you a fortune, have they? Money's money, and it's no good nosing round trying to find out what they give it you for. I'm going to off it as soon as I can, but two-ten is two-ten, and besides there's more in it than that."

She said this with two or three emphatic nods.

The door leading to Trenham's room opened, and he came in.

"I think Mr. Carline wants you, Miss Lipinsky," he said.

With a nod at her teapot Sophina gathered up some minutes she had been typing, and left the room.

"What is the matter? Has anything happened? It was not like you not to let me know," said Trenham. "I have been nearly frantic with anxiety."

He tried to seize her hands, but she withdrew them.

"I telephoned your father at the laboratory. . . . He thought you were here as usual. Where have you been?"

"To my uncle's."

"Is anything wrong?"

"Everything. You know it."

"No, no . . . Ruth, you . . ."

"You know it is wrong."

"We can't talk about it here. . . . Let us dine to-night . . . at North Street."

"No."

"Out then."

"We might be seen. It was you who were always afraid of that. Now it is my turn."

"For God's sake tell me what has happened."

"It is Leslie. I don't know how it all came about. It was my fault, I think. We were talking about what he would do, and I said you would help him. I'm sure that was it. He quarrelled with my father and said terrible things to him, told him he had always lived on charity, and was being employed out of charity. . . . Is it true?"

"No, of course not. He is doing very useful work."

"But his great invention—has that been used?"

"I . . ."

"You know it has not."

"My dear, dear child—please, please . . ."

"Leslie knew it. He always knew it. He knew we were in a false position. . . . You can't deceive the young people. They are terrible . . . terrible. . . . After his quarrel with my father, Leslie asked me point-blank if you were paying his school fees. . . . Of course you are not, but he is so suspicious. He won't believe even me, even me. . . . And he went and joined the Army, a boy like that—and they have taken him . . ."

"How ridiculous it all is," said Trenham kindly. "Don't worry, my darling. We'll soon get him out. Why didn't you come straight to me? You could have saved yourself all this, and me to-day's agony."

Ruth stood up and looked him straight in the eyes.

"I want to know," she said. "Did you ever use my father's invention?"

"There was an idea in it."

"Has it been used?"

"It—it may have been."

"Is he paid by the Government or by you?"

"By the Government, of course. He is very useful—"

really. Why do you stand there like an accusing angel ?
—a very lovely one."

"I'm not accusing you, Seymour. I'm accusing myself. I haven't any right to accuse anybody but myself."

He understood at last that she was serious.

"Ruth, that's all. I don't know what to say. I'm
—I only know that it has been the first real happiness I
have ever known. . . . What has all this nonsense about
your father to do with that ? I'd worked with him when
I was young. He was a good man then, and I wanted to
help you. . . . Is that a crime, to want to help ? Is it ?
. . . . You stand there with your eyes accusing me . . ."

"Not you . . . Not you . . ."

Ruth was staring at him, staring, staring, taking in
every detail of his features, the strong, heavy jowl, the
sensitive lips, the unhappy hungry eyes, and she was filled
with pity for him and knew that she had always pitied
him, so profoundly, so passionately indeed, in response
to his passion, that she had forgotten herself in him.

"I swear to you, Ruth," he said, "that I have loved
you with the only love of my life. It has not been a light
thing. . . . I stole the rose from your grey dress that
Sunday. I thought that would be enough, so great and
pure was my love. But I wanted you. I wanted you
in my house. You made it perfect, alive, the glorious
answer to all the damned vulgarity and hypocrisy of life
as it is now. . . . It has not been a little thing. I want
it to be greater still. I shan't go back. I'd been planning
everything. I didn't want to tell you yet. The little
house is to be yours, always yours. Everything that I
have, everything that I am, is yours."

She shook her head slowly from side to side, and tears
of utter misery rolled down her cheeks. It was she who
was at fault, because, pitying him, she could not take
what he had to give, the passion stored up through his
life for the being in whom he should find the quality he
had always idolized. That pity had left her, and she was
filled with loathing of it, the blind egoistic passion. . . .

How dared she, how dared any human being pity another ? To understand and to love : yes, that was healthy, that was strong, but pity was weak and destructive, an emotion only of illusions. She had deceived herself, she had deceived him, out of pity. . . . She tottered towards him :

"Oh, Seymour, forgive me . . ."

"My beautiful, beautiful Ruth. There is no question of forgiveness. I love you. I swear I will make you happy. . . . I swear . . ."

"No. No. No. No. No. Not that. . . . I have lied to you. . . . I have lied to you. . . . I don't love you."

He placed his hand roughly over her mouth in an attempt to silence her, and stood staring horribly, incredulously, into her eyes, and against the enormous powerful strength in his hand she nodded and went on nodding in her agony to force out the truth between her and him. He forced her head back until she had to close her eyes, and he said between his teeth :

"I knew this was bound to come. I thought the time would come when I should have to master you. . . . You are mine ; do you hear ? Mine ! You're young . . ."

At last she could resist no more and stood breathlessly still. Ah ! That was clear gain, not to resist and to let his will rush through her and find no answering will in her. It was he then who weakened. He let her go and staggered away from her, refusing to admit what she had told him without a word. He had loved her, worshipped her, idealized her, and he would not believe that she had gone from him.

She had recovered herself, and was determined to understand and to forestall every movement as it took place in him. He was old, he belonged to the old world, in which men and women had understood almost everything but themselves. For his sake she had plunged down into that old world, but now she had climbed out of it again, and she was the stronger and the better for her understanding of it.

She said :

"I want to tell you everything, Seymour. I will dine with you to-night if you like, but not at North Street."

"Why not at North Street?"

"Does it matter where? So long as we can be quiet and can try to understand each other."

"Very well," he said. "We shall have to stay late to catch up the correspondence."

She took up her note-book.

"Do you want me now?" she asked.

"Please. . . . But I don't understand you, Ruth. I don't understand you. . . . I'll be ready for you in half an hour."

He stood gazing at her in perplexity for some moments, winced at the memory of what she had said to him, then turned and walked slowly out with his head lowered so that his back looked to her like that of a heavy old man.

Sophina returned with her arms full of buff papers.

"Oh, well, I'm not long for this job. Ruth, old dear. . . . Carline's going to put up a bit of money for me, and I'm going into a show. I have been lucky. There's a lot of real Russians knocking around, and I haven't met one of them. I think they must run away when they see him. . . . I had a bit of a fright the other day when I was dancing at a hospital. The Russian Ambassador's daughter was there, but she was such a fine lady she wouldn't speak to me. She looked a bit like you, Ruth, the way you look at people when they get a bit above themselves. . . ."

"Really?" said Ruth.

"Yes. The way you looked just now when I came into the room. I bet I make a lot of money when the war stops."

"Money?" said Ruth.

"You ought to marry a rich man with your looks, Ruth. And there will be rich men after the war, mark my words. . . . I don't think either you or me was cut out for typewriting."

Trenham's bell rang, and Ruth went into him. They worked without a word for a couple of hours, and by that time the Ministry was empty. A converted hotel, it was extraordinarily dismal, and typical of the upheaval and desolation of the war. Trenham remarked on this.

"I am beginning to hate London," he said. "I sometimes think the trenches must be cheerful in comparison. I meet young officers who long to go back. They see the changes which have come over us so gradually that we have not noticed them."

It eased him to talk. He was dreading his interview with Ruth. At the back of his mind he had been repeating over and over to himself what she had said, and living again through the sickening sensation that had come over him as she had suddenly snapped her resistance to him. It had been so staggeringly sudden. Never, never had he had the smallest doubt that he possessed her. He had loved, told his love, and won her so that everything else had become definitely what it had always been—extraneous, and he had vaguely planned how to preserve this beauty in his life when the time came for him to return to the North—Ruth in North Street, which he would visit constantly, and long holidays abroad every year.

They wandered through the crowded streets, full of sauntering soldiers and loud-voiced women, with news-vendors shouting and muttering the news from Russia, which for the moment seemed to be the centre of events. He took her arm and they walked as they had so often done, absorbed in each other, hardly heeding what was going on around them, scarcely knowing which way they turned.

As they reached Piccadilly Circus there was an air-raid warning. Involuntarily they ran and entered a lighted doorway out of which poured presently a stream of foreigners, Belgians, French, Jews, soldiers, prostitutes, serving-women, waiters . . .

"Doesn't look as if this was safe," said Trenham.

"I don't mind," said Ruth, "so long as I am not in

the street. It is the frightened people I mind more than the noise or the danger. What is this place?"

"It's the Café Claribel. . . . If you are not frightened we had better have dinner."

A fair number of people had stayed in the café saloon. The Doré gargoyle *maitre d'hôtel* was unperturbed. It would take more than a German bomb to remove him unless it removed the whole of the Claribel, and then he would gladly die. . . . He slipped forward on seeing the unusually distinguished new client, and with arm outstretched he guided Ruth and Trenham to a table.

Trenham nodded his thanks, gave up his hat and coat, and sat glowering round. It was not the place he would have chosen for a fateful and intimate conversation. He ordered dinner, frugal and plain as Ruth liked it, and to postpone whatever she might wish to say, remarked:

"By the way, do you remember the car stopping on the Brighton road. Extraordinary thing, I met the young man who gave us the petrol. It was the other night at Carline's. His name is Trevor Mathew, a remarkable youngster. I thought he was an actor at first, but it seems he is a lawyer. Very good firm up North. His father stood for my constituency. Good family, I believe. It was the car and the nigger chauffeur and the lady in the car that misled me."

Ruth turned pale and her lip quivered. So Trevor had seen her then—the first time. And what was all this about a car and a negro chauffeur and a lady in the car? It sounded just fantastic: so unlike the Trevor she had met that morning.

Trenham went on:

"I asked Carline about him. It seems he was a great friend of young Harry Hardman, and was of course overshadowed by him, but they and another youngster were the social success of London before the war, a new kind of young man. . . . Carline spoke of them with tears in his eyes. You know, the tone he uses when he talks of the Russian Ballet or any of the wonders these London

people brag about before the war. By the way, how provincial they are! How completely ignorant of anything outside their own ten thousand people! I don't wonder the Ministries had to be made for them to keep them embalmed for the duration. . . . You don't seem to be listening!"

"Oh yes, yes," said Ruth. "I was listening. Do on."

"Well, it was at Carline's party or at Cherryman's. They were all so happy, like little birds. I felt it was such a pity they should be shut up by the war. Why shouldn't they twitter? . . . I didn't feel at home in it, and I stood in a corner looking on. So did young Mathew. I liked him immensely, the clean look of him, but I don't think he liked me. He walked home with me, or nearly home. I wanted him to come and talk, but he wouldn't. He . . . By the way, he works in your uncle's office."

His eyes darted a piercing glance at her. She felt, but did not see it, and said absently:

"Yes."

Some distance away in the corner of the café saloon she had caught sight of Trevor sitting with his back to her, and opposite him was a woman with a hard, handsome face who watched him with jealous eyes. She averted her gaze, dreading that Trenham should follow its direction, turn, and see him. Trenham went on:

"He told me an extraordinary story, something about a Jew and a million, and how easy it would be to change the face of things. I think he's a bit of a dreamer, and probably very unhappy with things as they are. . . . That sort of thing is all very well, but one of the keenest pleasures left in the world is blowing arguments to hell with a joke. Take that pleasure away, and there is very little left to spice the rest. People will argue, and in the last resort what are you to do?"

"Don't," said Ruth. "I can't bear your being cynical."

"That isn't cynicism, my dear. It is reason. . . . I heard a man at the Club the other night airing a theo-

that the war came about because the men couldn't stand the women any more and preferred to go out and kill each other. . . . One theory is as good as another, and that seemed to me very sweeping and complete. One couldn't disprove it."

Ruth kept saying to herself:

"He will never understand. He will never understand!"

He was a very wonderful man, strong, powerful, intellectual, decisive, but because nothing had a spiritual meaning for him he was clumsy, though he was sensitive enough to feel dissatisfied with everything except Love. That ideal remained. He drowned his dissatisfaction in it, and she knew that she had to destroy it for him. But now it had become impossible for her to speak. The sight of Trevor with that woman devouring him with her eyes made her dumb. She could not reconcile Trevor as he had been that morning with Trevor as she saw him now, sitting there perfectly at his ease, apparently quite happy. Trevor—with such a woman! One who was soaked in her own desires. . . . It was even worse for her when she saw a little Jew with black, oiled hair and quick, darting black eyes go up to him and shake hands with him familiarly, and give an offhand intimate nod to the woman. So intent and so horrified was her gaze that Trenham could not help giving a hurried glance round. He did not recognize Trevor, however, and with a kindly smile he said:

"You shouldn't mind such people, Ruth. They live their lives and don't interfere with us."

He stopped short, for he had recognized the woman. He looked at Ruth, bit his lip, and was silent. A minute or two later he said:

"Don't look at them. . . . What's the matter with you to-day? You seem to be feeling things too much. . . . It would have been much better to go home. I wonder why women can never forgive that. . . ."

"Because women are responsible," said Ruth, astonished at the power and force of her own thought. "They are responsible for everything, everything. I would never

blame a man for anything he did. I don't blame you Seymour. I blame myself. . . . I'm worse than that woman, because she doesn't pretend. . . ."

The air-raid had begun. They could hear the booming and thudding of the guns.

"Don't. Don't," said Trenham pleadingly. "Don't. . . . Don't talk about it. . . . Don't think about it. One can't think of these things in the old way. I love you. When peace comes there will be nothing for us two but our love."

"Seymour," said Ruth, "I think it would be best if I stayed away for a week or two, and then I shall know what to say, what I mean, what I want."

"You mean that?"

"Yes. Yes. . . . I'm not fanciful. You know me well enough to realize that I'm not. . . ."

There was a tremendous crash. The windows shook : a sound of breaking and falling glass : the floor trembled : the whole building seemed to veer over and right itself like a ship in a storm : piles of plates slithered down : everybody jumped up : two or three women fainted. A man at the next table said, with a slow smile :

"That's done it !"

The guns boomed and thudded.

"We'd better get out of this," said Trenham, but Ruth, trembling, resumed her seat, and said :

"That must have been very near."

"Piccadilly, I should think. You see, it's just that affecting your nerves without your knowing it."

Ruth began to feel hopeless. He would evade her every attempt to make herself clear, and if she failed to do that she would remain entangled with him for ever and ever because he loved her, with an old man's confiding, indulgent, corrosive love. . . . She looked up at the group in the corner. They had not moved. There was permanence in them too. They looked as though they would sit there for ever. Could what Trevor had said be only a theory, about as important as the Club theory

of which Trenham had spoken? No. No. No. It had gone straight to her soul, where it had released her own thought, her own feeling, and showed what was in her own life to be false and superficial and without reaction to her own feeling. It had done more than that even. It had given her the clue to the immense falsity that governed the world, so that every appearance corresponded to no reality, even the war. . . . That was trivial and superficial because it corresponded to nothing that was spiritually true and had become mechanical and habitual.

In a very few moments the people in the restaurant had recovered themselves. The band began to play again. Fresh people came in. Waiters returned and were busy fetching wine and liqueurs to restore panic-stricken nerves.

"All the same," thought Ruth, "I can't let him go away thinking that nothing has happened. If I did that it would be the end of me. It would be like a dropped stitch, and I should spend the rest of my life trying to pick it up."

She smiled at him. She was very fond of him, her big, clumsy, helpless man, and it was so much better now that her blinding pity for him was gone. . . . He was elated by her smile, as eager as a dog that has not been spoken to by its master for a long time.

"You know, Seymour," she said, "Leslie is right. The young people are tremendously right in insisting on having things out. . . . I want to say. . ."

"Oh, very well! I'll listen," he grumbled.

"I want to say that it wasn't quite fair of you to pretend that father's invention was good. . ."

"I only wanted to be kind."

"It put things wrong from the start, and if it hadn't been for Leslie they might have gone on being wrong for ever. . . . I think men are going to be very wonderful now. They will just force women to be truthful by understanding them. Leslie knew, and he couldn't stand my father being so pleased with himself, and then I'm sure he knew about you and me."

"No!"

"Yes. He wouldn't have minded if it had been a true thing, but you see he and I . . . Well, I could deceive myself, but I couldn't deceive him. That is what happened. Don't you see?"

Trenham shook his head. His eyes sought hers in dog-like pleading misery.

"That is what I meant," she said, "when I said I was worse than that woman. We can't lie when boys like Leslie are being killed out there every day. If everybody stopped lying there would be no need for them to be killed."

"I love you, Ruth, I love you, Ruth," said Trenham in a low despairing voice. "It has been the one true thing of my life. Don't kill it. Oh, for God's sake don't kill it!"

"You see," she went on, "I hadn't lived at all when I came to North Street. I had just worked. There hadn't been time or room . . ."

Trenham nodded and kept his head bowed. He understood that he had profited by her ignorance, and that for some reason which he could not grasp she was ignorant no more.

"Yes," he said. "Yes."

"You see," she said, "it is that kind of thing in women that has forced the boys out."

That he could not follow. She seemed to him to be merely fantastic, and it hurt him intolerably.

"That's enough, Ruth . . . Keep Leslie out of it now. I'll see that he's all right. I'm not going to let them waste a boy like that. They have wasted far too many already. I'll see that he's all right. I have loved you, Ruth. I understand. You will love me in time. I'll give you years, if you want it."

She shook her head sadly. He took out his pocket-book, and let the faded pink rose fall on to the table.

"I stole that," he said. "That's what you mean, isn't it? I'll give it back to you, if you like."

"No. No. We're not children, though we have been. I don't want it back. I'm not trying to destroy what has been only to make sure that it shan't destroy me or you. You especially, because there are others in your life."

He carried the pink rose to his lips.

"It was just a dream, then," he said, "and North Street is just a dream too. I used to fancy that the kind of life that made those houses was coming again. And I wanted to be in it, a lovely, dainty, composed life, and then you came and there was such a life. Ugliness and monotony and mechanical hardness had all slipped away, and then we were gracious and elegant. When we walked in St. James's Park I used to fancy we were Mirabell and Millamant taking the air after a delicious quarrel, or Tom Jones and Sophia come up in the coach along the Bath Road. I never felt that I was a day older than you. I suppose I was a fool, but I loved you and I know that you will love me. I knew it couldn't go on as it has been, but I didn't want you to wake from the dream. I . . . I . . ."

"Will you leave it to me, then?"

"Yes. What can I do?"

There was despair in his voice, and he struggled. He would not let her see the agony he was in.

Cora Dinmont had caught sight of Ruth, and drew Trevor's attention to her as the eloping typist of the Brighton road. Ruth had only just time to hold the menu in front of her face as he turned. Cora marked the glad recognition in his eyes, and a fury came into her own.

"You were wrong about them," said Trevor. "He is Sir Seymour Trenham, the explosives expert brought down from Newcastle for the war."

"And the girl?" drawled Cora.

"I believe she works in his department. She is the niece of the head of my firm, Mr. Hobday."

Cora simmered with spite. She could have every sympathy with Ruth as a typist, but Ruth as a lady was an object of hatred.

"Well," she said, "she ain't half as good-looking as she thinks. Just the sort to marry an old man like that. I think it's disgusting what girls like that will do for money."

Trevor laughed at her good-humouredly, and was even more amused to see Mr. Ysnaga, after a keen, sly glance at Ruth and Trenham, decide that they could not possibly be milked and were not and never likely to be of his world.

"I must take you home," said Trenham.

"For the last time," she said, feeling much happier.

"For a while," said he. "For a while, perhaps. We will always be friends whatever happens."

"Oh, yes," said Ruth.

The guns had stopped when they passed out into Piccadilly Circus, and the streets were absolutely deserted. There were neither 'buses nor taxis in sight, and they had to go by train. In the Tube station there where whole families sitting staring vacantly in front of them, children lying asleep, mothers holding their babies wrapped up in blankets, men smoking, spitting, wandering noisily up and down.

Trenham held Ruth's arm tightly clutched in his. It was torture to him to lose contact with her, and he said, with a grim smile and a heartrendingly jocular tone:

"It isn't only arguments that the fools blow to hell with their guns."

Ruth looked up at him gratefully:

"We could always be happy together, you and I. . . . But if it had gone on as we were I should have found the world full of ugliness to-morrow. . . ."

"Should I have done that for you?"

"No. I should have done it for myself."

He looked so puzzled in his hurt. He was like a great boy—only of the older generation, the generation that had never grown up, the generation represented by the Kaiser, and Roosevelt, and all the other boys who had grown grey and tubby without noticing it. He was so good, so decent, and, looking up at him, it hurt Ruth to think of Trevor sitting so happily and so much at his ease

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with those inexplicable people. It was Trevor who had made her new happiness possible, Trevor through whom she had understood Leslie, and through Leslie herself and Trenham. . . . What was the meaning of it all? To her it was as disastrous and terrible as the pitiful poor people still huddled in the Tube, although the signal of safety had been given long ago.

Trenham would not leave her without embracing her. He held her long in his arms and whispered:

"You will love me, Ruth, you will love me."

And all the while she thought with anguish of Trevor and that woman, that monstrous devouring woman, and it was almost a comfort to her to hope that what Trenham said would come true, and that she would love him, until she remembered that Trevor had spoken of her grey dress, that Sunday in Whitehall, her grey dress and the pink rose.

XIX

PLOTS AND PLANS

TREVOR had not failed to mark the effect of the word "million" on Mr. Hobday's mind, and his own thoughts were turned more seriously than they had been to Mr. Angel. That apparently was the magic word which kept people satisfied. Millions of men were being killed, millions were being spent every day, thousands of millions were now owing, millions had been subscribed for charitable purposes, millions of women were engaged in war-work, credits were voted by the hundred million, millions of new voters were added to the register, and Sunday newspapers were circulated by the million. As long as things were done on that scale nobody worried, nobody attempted to think, nobody wished to criticize. Breathe the word, and even the most cherished moral prejudices were suspended and the most rigid rules could be broken with impunity. It was to this that Trevor attributed the hypnotic power of the newspapers. They screamed and shrieked the word "million" in different forms of type until all their readers felt that they were millionaires and could do as they damn well pleased, if not always individually, then in the mass, nationally. Having had the good fortune not to be caught up in this Gadarene unanimity, Trevor was more and more fascinated by the idea of what he could do with a million used honestly for genuine ideals and things of permanent worth. He had to admit that one million was very little compared with thousands of millions, but on the other hand one man could make more

effective use of one million than millions of people could of many millions.

He inquired, therefore, into what Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga were doing, and found that they were only intent on making more millions. Mr. Ysnaga's one bright idea was to organize a system of tally-men to go among the munition workers with expensive luxuries—pianos, fur-coats, jewellery, scented soaps. With a sound commercial instinct he proposed to treat the munition workers as concessionaires treat natives in tropical countries. That was good business, but Mr. Angel wanted to be an English gentleman, and there Mr. Ysnaga could not help him while Trevor could, and as schemes began to flower in his mind he attempted to conquer his reluctance and was willing to help Mr. Angel in return for a free hand. He could see no reason why money vulgarly acquired should be vulgarly used, and why modern organization should be devoted entirely to economic and social purposes. In the old days it had been a favourite discussion with Hardman and Peto as to whether the proper way to straighten out social tangles was not to begin by organizing the intellectual and spiritual life of the country, and Hardman used to declare that with a million and half a dozen young men could bring even the Church and the Law to their senses, smash the newspapers, and make possible an aristocracy of imaginative people, men and women of quality, who would be constantly recruited from the generations as it became possible for them to live for something more than the day's eating and sleeping. . . . That idealist side of Hardman had been the real man, and Trevor felt that he owed it to him to attempt to fulfil his dream and put the poet, who had only been an after-thought, in his place. The poet had been collared by the newspapers, who had made of Hardman, the rather sardonic critic of modern society, a patriotic prig. That was depressing. If the newspapers could do that, what was there that they could not do?

The difficulty was where to begin. And if he began,

where would it end? He was not a revolutionary. He wished to destroy nothing. Rather he wished to restore vitality to decayed traditions, to reveal the overlaid England that had produced Shakespeare and Milton, Fielding and Swift. If money could do it he would go for the money, but he was not altogether sure that money could do it. A theatre, a bookshop, a publishing house. It was a question of ramming taste down people's throats until they acquired it; only of course the difficulty would be that people as they acquired taste would be nauseated by the old habits and they would ascribe their nausea to the new thing.

He thoroughly enjoyed these speculations and arrived at one very definite and important conclusion, that for England the problem was not political, but, as the decadents of the nineties had seen in their funny, exaggerated way, a question of æsthetics. The English really had nothing to worry about except their deplorable taste. It gave him a peculiar mischievous pleasure to air these views to Cora who, perceiving that they pointed straight to Mr. Angel, was delighted. She thought Trevor would make a splendid theatre-manager because he looked so fine in his evening clothes. As usual, he was jocular and a little ironical, and she could not perceive how serious he was beneath his almost flippant triviality, and when he talked to her about reviving Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher and Congreve she plucked up courage and told him that Mr. Ysnaga wanted her to go on the stage. She thought he meant to stay in London and throw in his lot with Mr. Angel, who had lately bought a theatre and also in the country a great mansion with a park walled round for seven miles in each direction, two villages, and half a dozen country houses. In one of these Cora designed to live with Trevor, for she imagined that, once he had decided against going North, he would marry her, if only because she was so useful in managing Mr. Ysnaga and Mr. Angel.

"The stage?" he said. "Good idea. It will give you something to do."

"I only want to do it if it is going to help you, if you want to do all these things you are always talking about. It's all women on the stage. And Angel is really keen on you. His feelings are quite hurt because you don't ask him for anything."

"There's nothing that I want for myself."

"Oh! You are funny. You have been a bit funny ever since you were ill. Well, shall I go on the stage? The new show is in rehearsal. I'd get ten pounds a week, but they'd expect me to show myself a bit in Town. Would you mind?"

She wanted him to say that he did, but he was so intent upon his own problems that he replied absently:

"Not a bit. I think it's time you lived your own life."

She was enraged, for she took his perfectly innocent words as an insulting reference to her former existence.

"All right, Mr. Innocence, if that's all you care . . ."

Sydney, who always hated Cora when she lost her temper, leaped to his feet on Trevor's stomach, where he had been lying, and barked at her. He had grown into a passable dog.

"Put that dog down!" she cried. "You're always nursing the beast as if it was a baby. So I'm to live my own life, am I? . . . That's what I get for looking after you when you were sick, and chucking all my friends and everything for you, is it? Well, it's a damn sight better life than any you'll ever know."

"Don't be absurd, Cora," said Trevor, throwing Sydney down. "All that points to what I say. You want to do something because the monotony of this life is fretting your nerves away."

"I don't mind the monotony, so long as it's with you."

Trevor was almost livid with irritation. Was there nothing that a woman would not endure for the possession of a man?

"What do you do when I am out?" he asked.

"I wait for you to come back," she replied, with an overwhelming sense of conscious virtue.

"That's my point," he said. "I mean I want you to want to do something for its own sake and simply because you like it; not because you think I like it."

That was too complicated for Cora. The answer to all his objections, the salve of all her own dissatisfaction was that she was in love with him, and Love, she thought, had made her a good woman.

"If you're dull," she said, "why don't you have your friends to see you?"

"I have no friends."

"There's that Cherryman and Carline, and that Trenham man. You talked about him a lot. The flat's big enough. Why don't you have 'em here? Mr. Angel's dying to meet some swells. Why don't you ask him to meet them? He's rich enough to meet anybody. Or do you think they'd turn up their noses because we're not married? You didn't mind down at the sea that time. If you've only make up your mind what you want to do we could get married if that's in the way, and go ahead."

Trevor felt dizzy, as though he was standing on the brink of an abyss. She had often hovered tremulously round the subject, but had never been outspoken before, and the thought of marriage had never crossed his mind.

"I thought," he said, "that we weren't going to make any plans until the end of the year."

"It isn't me," she cried. "It's you that's complaining. I simply mentioned that Mr. Ysnaga wanted me to go into the new show, and you begin to throw my old life in my teeth."

"I did nothing of the kind."

"Yes, you did," she said, almost weeping. "And you said your friends wouldn't come here because of me."

"Absolute invention!" muttered Trevor.

"It isn't invention. It's the truth. I'm not a liar if I *have* been good to men. You said you were going on the stage, and I wanted to go too."

Trevor's brain reeled. So all his idealistic projects only meant to her that he thought of going on the stage. I

that was what they were to her, what on earth would Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga make of them?

"All right," he said. "I don't care a damn. If you want to meet people, you shall. There aren't any barriers nowadays. Nobody can object to anybody. You shall have my friends. You shall have everybody I know. I live with you. I'm not ashamed of you, only you must stop this jealous crouching over me. Why, you are jealous even of the dog. The longer we go on the worse you. . ."

He stopped suddenly, as like a piece of ice dropped into his brain, the idea stabbed home to him that she was thinking all the time of the approaching hour when he must leave her, and that she intended to marry him: and behind her slyly moved the sinister figure of Mr. Ysnaga.

"Don't let us make fools of ourselves, Cora," he said. "I lost my temper. I beg your pardon. I shall be only too glad if you do go on the stage. You will be helping. . ."

Again he stopped. What had happened to falsify his utterance so confoundedly? When he thought a thing it was true. When he spoke it at once it sounded false, insincere, and to Cora especially it was becoming difficult to be simple and truthful. In everything, even about food, clothes, drink, and money he had to talk to her in words of one syllable. He began again:

"You will be. . ."

No. It was no good. She would not be helping him. The stage on which she would be acceptable would be the stage of legs and lingerie. . . . What he really wanted to say was that she would be relieving him, saving him a great deal of trouble, only that he could not allow himself even to think. . . . For a moment or two he thought as she said, calculatingly, and he fancied that it would be a good thing if she kept the two Hebrews occupied with the public activity which they could understand, while quietly, and at their expense, he set about putting his schemes into practice. The only way, he was sure, was to do it without talking about it, buy the people and the

bricks and mortar he wanted, and send the bill into Angel. Yes, that was how Cora would be useful to him.

"Well," she said, "finish what you were going to say. I'm all right. I've got the best back in London. That's not a thing to be sneezed at. You've got to be busy, or these damned Jews will go cold. I know them. They don't sit in chairs hugging dogs while the grass grows under their feet."

This was a cutting reference to Sydney, who had jumped back on his master's stomach.

"All right," said Trevor. "I'm glad you want to help. You'll enjoy being in the theatre, and we'll introduce Angel to some lords and ladies. . ."

"And Cherryman?"

"Of course Cherryman. You couldn't start anything in London without Cherryman. He's a kind of man, a milliner, who provides the ladies with fashionable ideal poets, painters, eccentrics."

He smiled as he thought that Cora as a great bare-backed actress would be more acceptable than Cora as the Lady of the Opposite Flat. That restored the good-humoured delighted amusement he had always loved in London at a place that, side by side with immense gravity, bred romantic oddities, from whom flashed an inspired folly that brought more illumination than ever came from religious ecstasy or the tragic and passionate adherence to the logic of an idea. It came, he thought, from the obstinate refusal of the English to take tragedy tragically. When they could feel no more they could laugh, and they could turn even horror into farce.

Cora stood looking down at him as he scratched the dog he had bought to avoid meeting her.

"Well," she said. "You are a queer fish. So quiet there's never any knowing what you are up to."

"Very often I don't know myself," said Trevor. "I'm glad we're going to move, and I think you and the Hebrews can do more for England than all the high-minded men of principle put together. You know, my dear, their

principles aren't their own, they are only inherited. They live on them as they live on inherited dividends. They . . . That's what I'm up against. I don't want to go North. I want to live on my own feelings, my own thoughts, my own ideals."

"There you go talking again," she protested. "And I did think you were going to be sensible at last. If I'm going on the stage I must have a press agent, and I must be photographed."

"So you shall," he said. "So you shall. Only for God's sake let me talk or I shall burst. I've been a listener all my life, and no one has ever said what I wanted them to say. Well, now they're going to. I'm going to teach them their catechism. 'I am a member of humanity, a child of love, and an inheritor of the kingdom of my soul.'"

"That's wrong," said Cora, who had been well drilled in Christianity at her Sunday School.

"No. It's the same old catechism, only saying exactly what it means instead of muddling it with Hebraistic terms."

"Well, you *are* extraordinary," she said. "I'd never have thought you were a bit religious. I had a brother went off his head with it: preaching. But he was an awful man. They had to lock him up because he wanted to go up to London to murder me. He said I was burning his soul in hell."

They were both by now thoroughly excited at having broken the tension in which they had lived for so long, and Cora felt that the victory was hers. She was shrewd enough to know that the months of quiet living had been the making of her and that without the accident of meeting him all these dizzy developments would never have been possible. He had shown a way where none had been visible, and even Mr. Ysnaga had perceived that with Trevor she had trebled her value in the market, and his adventurous mind set no limit on the money that could be got through Trevor's touch which, without disturbance of any kind, made old things new and faded pleasures bloom

again. Cora herself did not understand it, but she knew that Mr. Ysnaga did, and that Mr. Angel was humbly prostrate before Trevor, not only because he was young and educated at Cambridge College, but because he was somehow exceptional, like a good picture or a rare piece of china. Mr. Angel had a nose for such things, and it had become Mr. Ysnaga's function to ferret them out for him.

And somehow with the relaxation of the tension her jealousy also was eased. She was delighted and happy to think that by going on the stage she was going to help Trevor, and she knew that by doing as Ysnaga wished she was committing Trevor to a greater destiny.

"That is one thing," said Trevor. "The next thing is the party. Cherryman's the man. It isn't me, you know, Cora. It's Hardman doing all these things. I never had a thought outside studying up the Law and going home and settling down some day, and being senior partner and sitting on committees. It was Hardman. He was always talking about setting England mad with the desire for the unattainable. He used to say the English had ideas and they loathe politics, but they can go mad for something so deeply desired that it cannot possibly become articulate. I wish you'd known Hardman. I was thinking of him when I met you. You know, the day when I smelt pink roses and walked out of life into something that was not quite life but something more, something peculiarly English, a long, brooding, vivid memory."

Cora laughed at him.

"Go on talking, Boy," she said. "It does you good. I'm off now at once to have some photos taken, and before we have the party I'll have my name in the papers and outside the theatre. . . . Angel's bought it, by the way. The money that man has, and the money he makes! So long, old dear."

She ran off merrily, and Trevor, thinking moodily of Hardman and how deeply he was committed to his loyalty

to him, called Sydney and returned to his own flat. He had not been there more than a moment or two when there was a ring at the bell and he went to the door to find his mother standing there. She stood still for a moment or two while her soft eyes scanned him for reassurance.

"Why, mother!" he said, holding her at arm's length and taking in the dear rosy face, so strong and calm beneath its gentleness, the clear grey eyes, the silken grey hair under the almost quakerish bonnet.

"You are looking so much better," she said. "I declare. You are no longer a boy. You frightened me by being a boy so long. What a strange place to choose to live in! Isn't it very noisy?"

"No. It isn't noisy. At least I don't notice it. I came here because I wanted people."

"Yes. It must be lonely for you."

"It was pretty bad after the Dardanelles. I don't suppose you feel it so much up North. But London was in a fever. It was a sort of helpless rage. It has been better since the Government went. We can make fools of ourselves in our own way. I mean, we don't have to pretend that anything is serious except the war, and we don't have to respect anybody. That's our way of doing things, just a mass movement . . . like shoving down the railings of Hyde Park in order to get the vote, or shoving in a scrum to get a hoof at the ball."

"I'm very glad," said his mother, looking at him lovingly.

That was all she had come to say, to make sure and then to say just that. Details, facts, were of no interest to her. She wanted to know how it was with her boy, and when she knew that it was well she was ready to withdraw. She had only come for the day and stayed long enough to give him all the news from home, and to tell him how they were looking forward to his return to them for good.

"I have been reading your friend Hardman's poems,"

she said. "Some of them are beautiful, but I don't think he always says what he means to say."

"That's true," answered Trevor. "The real Hardman isn't in them at all. I don't think the real Hardman would have appeared before he was forty. There was such a lot of him."

"And it is just those men who will be needed."

"That's it," said Trevor indignantly. "Any stupid brute could have done Second-Lieutenant's work. I'd much rather it had been me than Hardman. You see, mother, he was essentially a man who would wait his time. That is why all this fuss about his poetry is so indecent. He'll have to work against that always as long as he lives."

"You talk about him as though he were alive," said she.

"So he is," said Trevor, and he was filled with a quivering sense that here in this love as in all his loves his friend would always be with him, and that with each gain of love he would be able to plunge deeper into that rare intimacy. His mother understood. No harm could ever come to this son of hers. He was bound to a fulfilment that would live all through his life and even beyond it. She was of Quaker stock and was practised in silence, the silence that strengthens, purifies, and unites even where words have divided.

"I'm very glad," she said. "I was hurt only that you did not tell us you were ill."

"I had to go through it alone," he said. "I had a good friend to look after me."

"Oh yes." She smiled at his suppressing the fact that the friend was a woman, and she was relieved too. He was untouched. There was no thought in him of being in love. He had wasted nothing. Whatever he had been through—and if he could not tell her, it was not for her to ask—was clear gain.

As she rose to go there was another ring at the bell, and he darted to the door, fearing lest it might be Cora, in whom he knew there was much that would lacerate his mother. It was Mr. Angel.

"Oh! come in, Mr. Angel. My mother is here. I want to introduce you to her."

Mr. Angel was overcome. He wanted to turn tail.

"I can tell you my pusiness on de mat," he said.

"No, no, come in," said Trevor, dragging Mr. Angel, breathless and perspiring, into his sitting-room.

"Mother, this is a friend of mine, Mr. Angel."

"A friend is too much," protested the unhappy Jew, hiding his short crooked legs behind the sofa.

"I'm sure my on does not use the word lightly," said Mrs. Mathew.

"He's a vonderful poy, ma'am," said Mr. Angel. "I should be so proud of dat poy as if I vos a hen vot laid a ostrich egg."

Mrs. Mathew laughed merrily. It was so like Trevor to introduce a perfectly incongruous acquaintance, and to expect him to be welcomed with open arms. And she used her merriment to cover her retreat.

Trevor took her to the door, and she stood for a moment looking over at the door of the opposite flat, hesitated a moment, then decided to say nothing, kissed him and took his arm as they walked downstairs into the street, where he hailed a taxi for her.

When he returned he found Mr. Angel mopping his brow, still perspiring from the anguish of the meeting.

"I didn't say anything horrible, did I?"

"No, no," laughed Trevor. "Sit down. She liked you. The mater can make people feel they aren't there if she doesn't like them."

Mr. Angel spread out his knees, planted his jewelled hands on them, and heaved a sigh or two as his stomach settled down.

"Vell," he said, "I been to de Var Office and dat general vot shpeaks to me like a lord say dat poy can be recalled if you'll gif him de regimental number. Qvite strong in his language he vos, and he said de damn recruiting officers vos doing all dey could to make de Var Office unpopular. Dey likes popularity, de generals."

Trevor had asked Mr. Angel to do what Mr. Hobday had refused, and Mr. Angel had trotted off as delighted as an office-boy running an errand for a considerate employer.

"De general vos so happy dat I had not come for my moneys."

"I'm ever so much obliged," said Trevor. "You are very kind. It means a great deal, I know."

"Vos de name Hobday?"

"Yes."

"Hobday, Treves and Treves?"

"Yes. That's the firm I'm with."

"Ach! So! I'm der company on de other side in de African case. It ruined me in Africa. But dere's millions in it, millions."

Mr. Angel looked uncomfortable.

"You don't have much to do with it?"

"No. Only as much or as little as I choose."

Mr. Angel was obviously relieved. It was clear that Trevor did not know much about it. He changed the subject, and said excitedly:

"You remember I offer a prize for de first Jewish V.C. in de British Navy. Vell, he has been von!"

He beamed.

"Hurray!" said Trevor. "That just gives me my excuse for the party: a real patriotic party in honour of the V.C."

"De Jewish V.C.," said Mr. Angel solemnly.

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TREVOR AND LESLIE

WITH so much contributing to his happiness Trevor became light-heartedly fantastic and thought of nothing but his party, to which he invited everybody he met. He was so absurdly happy that people smiled as they saw him pass, for it was long since young men had walked the air in London. He invited Mr. Barnes and the cashier at the office, and sent invitations to Cherryman and Carline, asking them to bring whom they pleased and as many as possible. He hunted up old acquaintances and asked them, attended rehearsals at the theatre, and invited the principal comedian and the singing ladies—a real *olla podrida* of London people. It made him heady with anticipation because it reminded him of Hardman's evenings at Cambridge, which had been a university in themselves, from which not even the shyest student could stay away—(Hardman and Peto used to drag recalcitrants in by force)—Mr. Angel would come, of course, with the V.C., and Trevor made him ask his general at the War Office. . . . Only one serious thought impeded his gaiety, and that was of young Leslie Hobday, who must be rescued in time for the party. For some obscure reason Trevor felt that he could not ask Ruth. It would have been as inappropriate as to ask his mother.

He obtained her address from the cashier at the office and wrote to her to ask for Leslie's regimental number. She did not reply, and after waiting a day or two, deciding that his letter might have gone astray, he called on her at the Ministry, but was informed that she was away and was

not expected back for a fortnight. As he was turning disconsolately away, having lost almost all his eager pleasure because Leslie was still languishing in the Army, Sophina came tripping down the stairs dressed *à la Russe*. She nodded and smiled several times before he recognized her. What? Mademoiselle Dolgorova? Sophina Solomonovna?

"How do you do?" he said. "I didn't expect . . ."

"Oh, I work here," she replied, "until I can get dancing engagement."

"I wanted to see Miss Hobday."

"Oh! She's ill, poor darling. She's been away nearly a week. She never got over her brother going. It was such a queer thing. He seemed such a sensible boy. You'd have thought he'd have waited."

"But he didn't."

"No."

She was just going to pass on, when he said:

"Oh! by the way, Mlle. Dolgorova, I'm giving a party on the ninth. I've asked Carline and Cherryman, and there are to be some theatrical people . . ."

Sophina's eyes glittered.

"I should be so glad if you'd come and dance. We're funny people, we English, and the party is in honour of the first Jewish V.C."

Sophina's lip curled at the distasteful word.

"I haven't seen him, but some friends of mine are immensely proud of him."

He was thinking:

"Of course I oughtn't to have mentioned the word Jew. It sounds so awkward. It never fits into any sentence, suggests the unmentionable, God knows why. Lassalle was a Jew, and so was Karl Marx . . ."

Really he must shake off the confounded habit of letting his thoughts run away with him.

He said:

"I hope Miss Hobday will soon be better. I only met her once. Please remember me if you are writing."

Sophina had guessed that he was implicated in Ruth's distress, though she was not certain whether he was aware of it. Men are so dense.

She said:

"Of course," and asked him for his address, the necessity for which had escaped him. He found his card and gave it her, and she slipped away smiling, because he had made her happy. Sophina said:

"He is in love with her. He is rich. He is young." And she congratulated herself on her wisdom in attaching herself to Ruth, and then as she thought of Trenham she put out her tongue.

She had walked only a few yards when Trevor came running after her.

"I say," he said; "if you want to go on the stage I can help you. I know some people—these friends of mine are putting on a show—and—I'll tell them if you like."

"Oh, thanks!" she said. "If it's the Ysnaga show, I've tried——"

"That's it. But I can make them give you a chance."

"Can you?"

"If you'll be at the theatre to-morrow I'll take you to Mr. Ysnaga himself."

"I know," said Sophina a little bitterly. "They only take people on the nod."

"Very well. I'll nod and they shall take you. You've worked hard for it."

"Worked! I should think I have." She thought of Carline and the months of affected Russianism.

"Worked! Well, I think I deserve a bit o' luck."

There was not much Russian about Sophina now. Her lips and her eyes glistened with her devouring ambitions, that were like flames to burn through the wax of the lewd town of the Gentile Londoners. Her little body was taut with elation as she danced along, feeling certain in herself that her real chance had come at last, her chance to show Finberg and her father and Carline, for the matter of that, what she was made of. She saw herself intriguing and

forcing her way to power and control in the theatre world and every nerve in her tingled for the fight. Ah! Wouldn't she send some of the men reeling and wouldn't she just flay some of the women, the carcasses, with neither energy nor talent to justify their being where they were with so much machinery set in motion to exhibit them to the public. The public! That was what she wanted to have her share in, amusing, exciting, and insulting the public just to show them what a Jewess could do, a Jewess born in the gutter and bred from a stock cramped and starved in the Ghetto in Russia . . . Russia? But this was fat rich England, fat and rich even in the middle of the great war which had brought Russia to ruin. The Jews knew they had always known, that the war meant ruin to Russia, and they were fiercely, savagely glad. . . . The energy released in her was astonishing, but she repressed it. As Trevor left her she said:

"Oh, you *are* good!"

"Not at all. Not at all."

Sophina watched him as he walked away, and, thinking of Ruth, she said:

"She'll get him. I'll see that she gets him."

It was too late to dream of going to the office before lunch. Trevor decided that he must dispose of the Leslie Hobday affair, and went to the house near Baker Street. Its poor gentility disappointed him, for it was not the kind of place he had imagined as Ruth's house. The door was opened by Leslie himself, looking as white as a ghost: hollow-cheeked and wretched. At first Trevor did not recognize him, and said:

"Is this Mr. Hobday's?"

"Yes. It is. He's out."

"Can I see Miss Ruth Hobday?"

"She's away."

"Will you ask her then to send her brother's regimental number to me, at her uncle's office."

"Did my uncle send you?" asked Leslie, in a ferocious tone.

"No."

"Then go to hell. I haven't got a regimental number. I crooked, and they kicked me out." He tried to slam the door, but Trevor put his foot in it and cried:

"Wait a moment. Wait a moment."

"What for?"

Trevor did not quite know why he wanted the door left open. He repeated:

"Wait a moment."

"Who are you, anyway?" asked Leslie.

"My name's Trevor Mathew. I remember seeing you once at the corner of Whitehall. But you . . ."

"Come in," said Leslie, suddenly changing his manner. He liked this young man with his quiet persistence.

Trevor obeyed him and followed him into the shabby dining-room, in which the Hobday furniture and the Paget-Sutton portraits were at war.

"Sit down," said Leslie.

Trevor sat down.

"How long have you been in my uncle's firm?"

"Nearly three years now."

"Going to stay there?"

"No. I have a firm of my own up North."

"I see. Look here, if I played my cards probably I could go into my uncle's firm. Is it worth it, or is it hell?"

"Oh, no. It's a bit dusty and old-fashioned. The old man is like a paper-weight sitting on the dusty pile of documents. As soon as he goes the draught will clean them up a bit. There'll be a big draught when he goes."

"I've made a fool of myself," said Leslie. "I wanted to strike out for myself. You think it would be all right if I went in there?"

"Well, your name's Hobday, just as mine's Mathew. Even if you don't like all that it stands for, there's a good deal in it. I'm in the same boat."

"Are you?" asked Leslie eagerly.

"Yes. There's an old firm waiting for me too. I'd like to start afresh, but it isn't as easy as all that. I mean,

one can't behave as though one hadn't a name or a memory. You can hate your uncle as much as you please, but he stands for a good deal more than himself."

"I say, you are decent," said Leslie. "Girls aren't any good, are they?"

"Not much," replied Trevor. "They don't know."

"No, they don't," said Leslie emphatically. "And what makes it worse, they think they do. My sister has fussed herself over it until she is ill, and there wouldn't have been anything to fuss about if I'd had a talk with you. Ruth's all right, but she's only a girl after all, and looking after a family is a man's work. You don't know my father, do you?"

"No."

"Well. He kicked against the Hobdays, and they cracked him like a nut. Where did you go to school?"

"Eton."

"Oh! I've just gone to Westminster, but it's rotten. Nothing to look forward to but the old war, and everybody mad keen about the Army. It's rough luck on us, isn't it?"

"The war?"

Leslie nodded and looked away. It was Trevor's first real contact with anybody much younger than himself. It was dramatically and splendidly the one thing needful for him. Leslie slipped into the terrible void left by Hardman, and more than filled it. He had a passionate quality which Hardman had lacked. Nothing would ever be easy for Leslie, whereas for Hardman, as for Trevor, everything had been easy, fatally easy. The way had been made smooth for them, even for their triumphant response to the need of the moment in the first months of the war. . . . But for Leslie there would be a grinding struggle for everything, to recover the ground that had been lost, to regain traditions that had been obscured, to redeem his inheritance from the bragging defiance to which the elders, losing touch with the young, had descended in their pathetic efforts to speak for those who should

come after them. Trevor understood that what he had been through was a trifle compared to the ordeal which had been imposed on Leslie, and that unless they joined hands the struggle would grow harder as time went on, and boys fighting their way into manhood would be crippled and done to death, though life should reserve a peaceful and serene surface. . . .

Odd how the war had made people think of themselves in relation to things greater than themselves, as symbolic, as being linked with others for purposes greater than their desires! Trevor was fully conscious of this. He had come clean through his struggle while the boy, so vivid, so eager, so nervously wrought up, was in the middle of his, and only for a moment comforted and consoled by the presence of this friend who could understand.

"I had to go into the Army," he explained, "to get rid of it. I can talk to you. You don't mind? You know, all the fellows who have gone, who don't *know*. We *do* know. They think we're awfully young, but we do know—all the things that people like my father have pretended not to know. We've got to know, because something's hurting us all the time and we've got to find a way out. You know what I mean. Evolution, and all that. . . . All right, I haven't been reading books. It's what I've been thinking for a long time, and I expect lots of fellows have been thinking the same thing. You have."

"Something like it."

"Well, it's as if things were rushing away from you at about a million miles an hour, and all the things you'd been told were important turned out to be nothing at all, and as if when you tried to play the game according to the rules it turned crazy because the game was a new game, and the rules were old rules."

"Why, that's the war!" said Trevor, beginning to grasp what the boy was driving at.

"That's it. We aren't playing the old game any more. Nothing that my father did can ever be done by me because I'm a different being, something quite new. So are you.

So is Ruth. I can tell them, the new people, as soon as I see them, and I can't make out why the old game goes on."

"You see," said Trevor, "we are not allowed to say that it is a new game because the old people think we want to say that it is better. But we don't say anything of the kind. We only say that it's new. Whether it is better or not remains to be proved. If we start out with a bigger truth you can be sure that we shall breed a bigger lie because people will always pretend to understand when they don't understand, and to believe when they don't believe. But the people who are the first to play the new game will have a lovely time. And, I say, about going into the office, your uncle and my father were friends when they were young, and they've worked together all their lives. I think they've played their old game pretty well. You've made up my mind for me, Leslie. I'm going on where they left off, and if you go in too we can play the new game together."

"Oh, I say! How ripping!" said Leslie, his pale cheeks flushed with excitement. "You must come again when Ruth is at home. She knows, although she's only a girl, and wants everything tidy and precise."

"I hoped to see her to-day," replied Trevor, "but I'm glad I found you in. You must come and see me, too, and we'll make plans. By the way, would you like a dog? I've got a fox-terrier I want to give away. He has a poor time cooped up in a flat in the West End; I'd like you to have him."

Leslie's eyes shone.

"Wouldn't I just," he cried. "Can I have him now?"

Trevor laughed and invited Leslie there and then to come back with him and take Sydney away.

XXI

RUTH RETURNS

RUTH fled to a quiet inn in the Chilterns to wrestle with herself, and to discover the truth both of events and the persons involved. Emotional battering at both was no good at all, though it might have been enjoyable. It could only end in bitterness. That was her great discovery. In London, where she could not but be concentrated upon persons, Leslie, her father, Trenham, and, remotely, Trevor, she could not weep and her thoughts must move through channels hot as fire in her mind. In the country she could relax. She was away from them all and could grapple with events, and first of all she could weep out her pain.

The country she had chosen was perfectly suitable. Fat, heavy, dull, overgrown with grass, monotonous with its woods and meadows unrelieved by water. Of vivid beauty there was none, save now and then in the sky, but hedge-rows, lanes, and woods soothed her as she wandered through them, and gradually she sank into them and was absorbed in their mood. Only then could she begin to think, and rather to her surprise she found herself facing squarely the facts as they had been, regretting nothing, blaming no one, indulging neither in self-pity nor self-reproach. She remembered first of all the pink rose and the gladness in her when she knew that Trenham had taken it, and her joy in his need of her. She flinched from nothing then. There had been no vanity in it, none. Feelings and emotions that had been suppressed in her had come tumbling out, clamorous as a new spring. They were

young, very young emotions. Ah! how lovely they had been, like songs, like the colour of spring buds. It was extraordinary how tenderly Trenham had taken them, how he had cherished them, and terrible it was how he had not seen them fade, almost at once. They ought never to have been given, never taken, but they had surprised her with their loveliness, and it had been so sweet to have them loved. In a grown woman how could a man know that it was only young love flowering too late? Certainly she could not blame Trenham. He had been more than content, tragically happy he had been with the illusion after the reality had faded at his touch, and there had begun that for which she must now suffer. She had allowed him to worship the illusion without undeceiving him. She had told herself that the full flowering would come—and it had not come. For him it had been a great, a triumphant passion, for her only the little song of young love. The pity of it! For him she could have gone on pretending. Lovers can go on pretending for ever that there are only they two in the world, but Leslie had felt the loss of truth in her, long before, many days before she was aware of it herself, and he had forced her to know what she was doing. And then—and then—came Trevor with his happy, easy candour. And he was untouched too. He was as she had been, innocent, childish, happy with the little songs that flowered in his heart, but possessed with a kind of vision that made him strong, and unable to pretend.

For hours she was able to forget her suffering in just lying back and thinking of Trevor. Something of Harlequin in him, of Pierrot, as though a spell were upon him, perhaps a spell of horror—who knows?—some power stronger than himself that made it possible for him to play with life even at its most terrible. Her one meeting with him had contained more life than all the rest of her experience. It alone, without her own honesty and courage, had made it impossible for her to go on pretending for ever. For that other the full flowering could never be, never, because

neither he nor she had waited for the first pretty song to die away. They had lived on that which was only meant to charm, and it had died. That was something for which all her life she must suffer. That she knew and that she bravely faced, though many tears were shed for it.

Worse was the thought of Leslie, and the shame she had unwittingly had in his torment, for nothing less than that could have made him act so desperately—so youthfully too—and he was always so old and deliberate in his actions—without a word to her, and without even turning to her for sympathy. She remembered that he had been with her when she noticed that the pink rose was gone. Had he turned from her then? Was sex so strong in a woman that it could repel everything that was not part of the immediate object of its desire? Was that why women always, always failed of full accomplishment in all other things? Here it needed an agonized effort to keep the thread of her thoughts, the driving passionate thought to which she was committed. Her sex throbbed and leaped in her in the attempt to crush out all other desires. And that she would not have. Not for a moment would she sink back into the old conceptions, the idea of goodness, the notion of prayer, the strange antiquated superstitions about womanhood which women had accepted in their indulgence for spoiled and humoured men. There was nothing evil in her sex, though it was terrible in its force. She cried within herself:

“I will understand! I will understand!”

And by sheer force of will she controlled the power in her that wished to sweep all her other faculties with it and use them to its own ends. Leslie must come first. That other could look after himself, but Leslie was only a child, and she owed it to him to nurse him into manhood. The family's responsibilities by her mother's death and her father's folly had been thrown upon her and she must not fail in them, as she had failed. . . . If she must be sacrificed she should have accepted that. This she knew was where she had erred. A sudden serenity had been

offered to her and she had clutched at it. Young love had sung in her, and she had let its song be turned to harm.

That much she made clear to herself, and for days she was tortured with the thought of Leslie suffering because of her inability to comprehend. So cruel, so stupid, so childish an error she ought never to have committed, and she could only face life again on condition that she understood all its implications.

Her paleness, her silence alarmed the good woman of the inn, who prepared choice dishes for her and made her drink much new milk.

Out of doors in the lanes and the woods she could wander without thinking, lost in a pained fruitful brooding, loathing the idea that Leslie should go out into the awful experience of the war, not at peace either with her or with himself. She thought of the war rather as a condition into which men passed, going out of life to face the risk of never returning into it again, for surely the war was something beneath human consciousness, something that repelled every human thought and necessitated a laying down of truth, a surrender of faith, an acceptance of nullity. To do that a man, or a boy for that matter, must needs be at peace or the evil of the war must creep into his life to destroy it. But what could she do? What could she do?

She wrote long letters to Leslie, but never posted them. Beyond a certain degree of intimacy letters only created misunderstanding, for words written were of no avail. She needed to hold the poor boy in her arms, to kiss his lips, to stroke his hair, to let her tears mingle with his, to press her face close to his so that she could feel the heat of his tears and to taste them—to share his bitterness, to take it into herself, to take all his hurt and burn it away with her love. And often she imagined that she was with him so, and she cried:

"Oh, Leslie, Leslie, my dear! . . . I love you so. I didn't mean to hurt you. I was happy for a little while. It was wrong of me. It was a poor little happiness. Forgive me! Forgive me!"

But as she imagined him he lay like a stone, his young face drawn and looking old and terribly wise, having judged her.

She was at her extremest suffering when she had his letter saying he had been released. At first she could not believe it, but it was in his hand and was written from home, just a note scrawled impatiently, and she felt that he was annoyed with her for not being there when he arrived. Once again she had been wrong and had sacrificed him to her own emotions, and, forgetting how hard her trial had been, she called herself selfish for having run away into solitude to enjoy her agony, and she began to think a little bitterly of the hardship of being a woman and so easily absorbed in whatever might be happening to herself, always, always the personal outlook—the personal interest. . . . How could men be so detached, so disinterested, so quietly and almost automatically self-critical? They could laugh so easily even when things were at their worst, and she could only get as far as the desire to laugh, and the perception that laughter was good and clean and wholesome. She thought that perhaps it was impossible for a woman to stand alone, and that brought her with a sickening swiftness to the social aspect of what she had done. She had attempted to stand alone, to ignore her own obligations and those of the man with whom she had sung the pathetic song of young love. . . . Something that she had lived in contact with another being, and therefore with humanity, must remain a secret, always a secret, moving only in secret through her own life in all its years, and in other lives not moving at all, a thing fixed and immovable, an impediment created by herself. The injury was as definite as a wound upon her body, and she was as conscious of it as though it had been so, and then she thought of all the wounded who had returned maimed for life. They bore their afflictions cheerfully, and seemed to grow accustomed to them and perhaps she would do so too. . . . Then she swung back to the baffling idea of the handicap under which women live, and this tormented

her for a long time until inexplicably she began to laugh. There was no occasion for it, unless it was the sight of the shining beech-buds swinging against the blue sky catching the pale light of the winter sun that had no warmth to bring them to their bursting point. She was alone in the woods. There was not even a bird in sight, though far away she could hear the melancholy cooing of wood-pigeons and far up every now and then a hawk hovered and swum on the wind, eyeing the brown sea of the woods for its prey. The wind whispered through the topmost twigs of the trees, and the light sank into their shadow as upon deep water, and Ruth, as she walked deeper and deeper into the tangled wilderness, felt that she would never return since here it did not matter that she was wounded because she could be alone. And she laughed with the music of full happiness. A startled fawn leaped upon the brow of a wet bracken, stared at her, and darted away, and she longed to touch it, to hold its slender neck in her arms and to stroke its tender throat. She ran after it, the dear fawn that had broken the stillness into which she had been sinking. And again she laughed at the absurdity of that impulse, and as she laughed she gained complete surrender and accepted that as she was a woman she must be personal in her outlook. Life is through persons, and a man takes his risks lightly knowing that he can always fall back upon a woman. In the end the whole burden falls upon women. Ruth accepted this exultantly, for she knew she had reached the truth of her own being. She could bring fruitfulness to a man's soul. That was her power as a woman. Had she sacrificed it? . . . No. No. No. She had not given it, but she had given honestly all she had to give.

She became then fiercely, passionately personal, and yielded to what she had been avoiding all the while, the thought of Trevor. Her impression of him had been true. There was in him something untouched, something of Pierrot wandering pale and mischievous outside life. Perhaps it was only because he had escaped the destiny of his generation. Perhaps—but she could not deal in

reasons now. She was certain of this fact. He was Pierrot playing at life, amusing himself with that woman of the café.

She retraced her footsteps. Nothing existed for her but Trevor. She was glad even that she had been wounded, for she had a strength and a knowledge of life which he lacked. It could only be given to him by a woman who knew her power. An insensible woman or a girl as untouched as himself could only amuse him, only play the Pierrot game with him.

There was not the smallest doubt in her that what she desired would come to pass. She knew not how. Within herself as within him it had happened. When? Long ago perhaps. It might be even as long ago as the day when she had passed him in the darkness of her uncle's office, or the day when she had seen him in Whitehall, when she wore the grey dress and the pink rose which that other had stolen. Or perhaps it had sprung to life in them as they sat oblivious of time in the chop-house in the City.

When she reached the inn she found another letter from Leslie telling her to come home at once. Trevor had been to see him, and had given him a dog.

Ruth kissed his letter, fondled it, read it over and over again. The news was what she had longed for. That those two should be friends was already a fulfilment: Leslie and Trevor. . . . Oh! what could they not be to each other and what could she not make of the two of them, both young, both saved from the terrible fate of the young to help in the task of achieving the hopes and dreams of those who were gone.

When she returned Leslie met her at the station with Sydney, from whom he would not part for a moment, not only because Sydney was a dog, but because he was Trevor's dog.

"This is my dog," said Leslie proudly, and that was all Ruth wanted him to say, for he was a boy again, utterly forgetful that he had ever had a trouble or a tortured

thought too strong for his young mind or an emotion too great for his boyish soul.

But Sydney was suspicious of her. The only woman he had known was Cora Dinmont, and her he hated. He crouched away behind Leslie's legs, and cocked an appraising eye at her.

"You were a silly ass to go away," said Leslie. "Trevor came to see you, but he's my friend now."

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XXII

THE PARTY

THE meeting with Leslie had shocked Trevor also into facing facts, and an admission that he had never had the smallest real intention of not taking up the life for which he was designed by birth, tradition, and circumstance. Hardman's doctrine of inspired folly was all very well, but it was only tolerable on condition that it should emerge from life solidly based, organized, and ordered. Perhaps Hardman had understood that, perhaps if he had lived he would have been more explicit about it, though probably he would have done something perfectly crazy which nobody would have understood just to prevent people taking him seriously.

"You know, Trevor," Hardman had said once, "you take me much too seriously. Everybody does. It is the old habit of turning persons into dogmas. It doesn't work nowadays. They tried it with poor old Meredith, but it didn't work. It doesn't work. It only turns them into a juju. Look at the Kaiser and Kitchener."

How sound Hardman had been! Trevor, trying to live up to him, felt like an undertaker asked to organize a wedding. His funeral carriages could be decorated with white flowers and ribbons; but what the devil was he to do about the black horses. Oh well! The party was the best he could do. He would steer Cora and Sophina into the theatre, and then when the last of his year came, he would return to the North and keep in touch with them and Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga, because there was never any knowing what might come out of it all. And there

would be Leslie to steer through. Oh yes, on the whole things had turned out very well, very well.

The agony of the war, which had reached its bitterest intensity at the turn of the Dardanelles, broke with the Russian Revolution. Every fibre of Trevor's being kindled to that bursting of the spring of human hope, and leaped into flame. The event was all the greater for being anonymous. No great name came out of it, because it was too immense an uprising of the human spirit for any ambitious fool to turn it to his own account. Trevor understood it very well. The human spirit had flamed forth at its only outlet. Everywhere else it was cramped and confined by the mechanical organization of life. Only in Russia, still feudal, still hundreds of years behind the times, could it effectively assert itself, and it had done so. That was the cardinal fact. It had made plain for all the world to see, even through the smoke and the fumes of war, the spirit of the young, that which sustains, guides, and leads humanity and drives it ever on in pursuit of the unattainable.

For days after the splendid news Trevor's life was one long chant of pure idealism. He knew that it did not matter now what happened. The truth had been uttered in the vast gesture in the East, and the West might go on mechanically denying it as it had been doing for a whole generation before the moment of utterance, but in the end to that truth it must come. Life, treasure, youth, honour, all human things may be thrown away, but the march of truth is irresistible. Above all, thought Trevor there was no hurry. There was time, there was room for everything. And as the pæan of his idealism sank back into his soul he moved about in the very spirit of Harlequin touching doors which did not open, stirring up people who only laughed at him, but happily and indulgently. How easily he could have turned the material in his hand into a commonplace success. He had Hardman's fame, Angel's millions, Ysnaga's cunning, but he refused to exploit any of these things. He preferred to bide his time until there were more like himself and Leslie, who knew

that the long awaited new life had begun to blossom in the souls of men.

The great case was opened at the Law Courts. He had never arrived at any real grasp of its detail, but he understood that it was a very important affair—to Mr. Barnes an infinitely greater thing than the Russian Revolution—because it would take six weeks, and there were five counsel on either side, with the leaders' briefs marked five thousand guineas. Mr. Barnes hummed and buzzed with excitement. Trevor went to Court with him, and there, sitting in the well of the Court, was Mr. Ysnaga, looking very bored. At the sight of him Mr. Barnes showed his teeth and was as frenzied with excitement as a chained terrier watching a rat run down a yard.

"I've subpoenaed him," he said. "The dirty pup. I'll get him for perjury this time. Last time I got him on false pretences. That's him. He's at the bottom of this affair. Would you believe it, they're so certain of winning this case that they've already sold acres and acres of land although it doesn't belong to them, and eight or nine companies floated on the strength of it and not a penny has any one ever seen of their money, and we've got to prove that they have no title."

Trevor sat listening sleepily to the opening of the case, marvelling at the extraordinary procedure, with its muffled solemnity, its archaic phraseology, its deadly slowness, with the judge nodding on the bench, silks and juniors lying back gazing up at the ceiling, the few people in Court trying vainly to catch what was being said. And after a time he could not bear it any longer, made excuses and walked away. As he passed through the closed door he caught Mr. Ysnaga's eye slanting in his direction in a kind of wink, and out in the corridor he met Mr. Ysnaga, who had slipped out from the other side of the Court.

"Bit of a surprise to see you here," said Mr. Ysnaga.

"Oh! it's our great case," replied Trevor. "We live on it."

"I used to," said Mr. Ysnaga, "but it's about finished

as far as I'm concerned. They've subpoenaed me out of spite. It doesn't look like any witnesses to-day though. It's got nothing to do with me. I've sold out of the City. Dear old West End for me, what?"

"Is Mr. Angel in it?"

"Yes. He's having a go at it now. He'd like to own a gold mine or two, but I've always said that nothing but a war on the damned niggers will settle it. It's the same old story. As long as the niggers are there appealing to the Government you get two sets of people squabbling, because they both hope to get the goods for nothing. Chase 'em out and they'll come to terms."

Trevor was charmed by the contrast between this trivial commercialism and the glowing ideals that because of the Russian Revolution possessed his own mind. He felt affectionate even towards Mr. Ysnaga and said:

"How's the show?"

"Tip-top. That Russian girl you brought me is some dancer. You should see her and old Cora glaring at each other's hair. There'll be trouble one of these days. By the way, you wouldn't care to go on the films? The Government's spending a lot of money on it now, and you've got just the face for it."

"No, thanks."

"There's heaps of money in it," said Mr. Ysnaga, wistfully.

"I'll stick to the law," replied Trevor. "I'll come and see you cross-examined, and don't forget my party."

Mr. Ysnaga took a taxi to the theatre, and Trevor went down to Westminster to take Leslie out to lunch, as he had fallen into the habit of doing two or three times a week.

"I promised I'd call for Ruth," said Leslie. "She's just gone back to the Ministry. She's been to see my uncle about me, and I'm to go to Cambridge if I'm still unfit when I'm eighteen, and then I'm to go into the office. And my uncle has been to see father and was awfully decent. He thinks no end of you."

This was news to Trevor, who had been under the im-

pression that Mr. Hobday on the whole disliked him. They called for Ruth, who came down looking very tired, though she forgot that at once in the joy of seeing them together for the first time.

"I miss Sophina," she said, "though I see her sometimes. She always talks of you, and likes Leslie."

"Oh, shut up!" said Leslie.

"I've just heard that she is a great success," remarked Trevor. "Of course she would be, out of sheer ambition."

"She's had a hard time," said Ruth kindly, and Trevor ruminating, replied:

"Oh, we've all had that," and his eyes added:

"Even you."

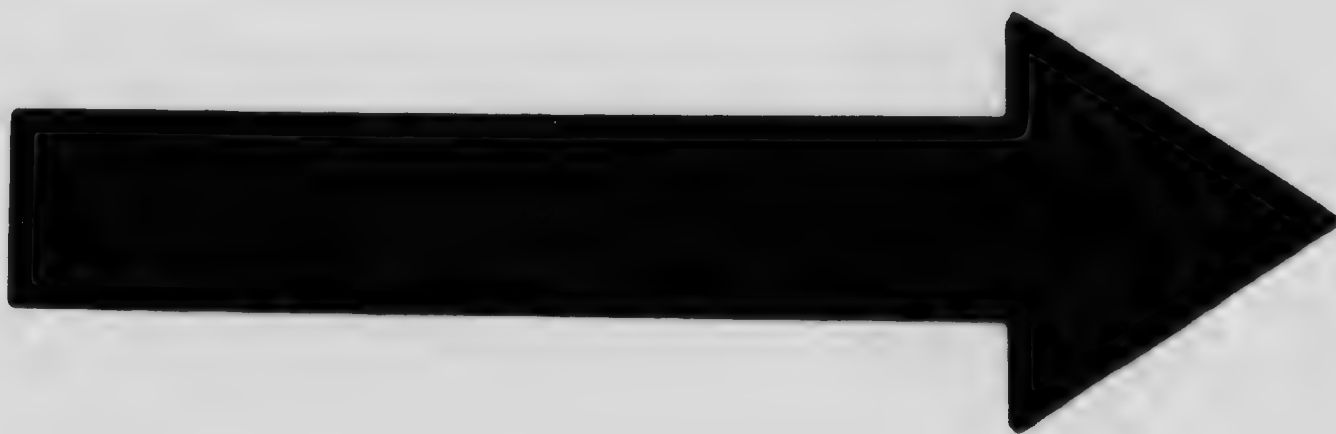
They lunched at a popular restaurant in Victoria Street, and Trevor, wanting to share everything with them, was torn with a desire to ask them to his party but he could not bring himself to mention it, and casting beyond it, he said:

"In the summer I want to take Leslie up North with me. We have a house in the Lakes, looking down on Coniston. You'd love it, and I want you both to meet my mother. She understands young people. She has lived her life and has kept an inexhaustible store in reserve. Very English. Don't you think that's what we want? We've had enough of being British. It means nothing—just Jews and money and patent medicines and Sunlight Soap . . ."

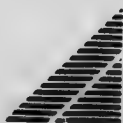
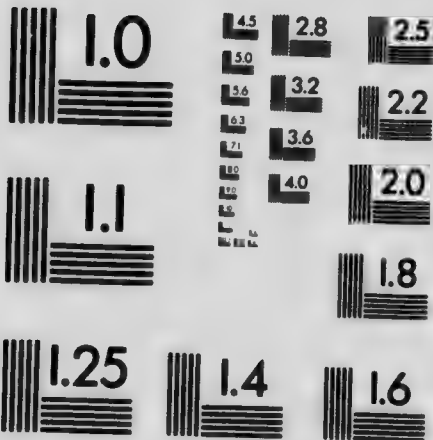
Ruth said:

"Your home must be . . ." She could not say what. Only she wanted to speak the word *home* in connection with him, the rare thing and the rare man together.

"I've been to the Law Courts this morning," he said. "There's a dead place for you. And the case I was listening to has been going on for nearly thirty years, since before I was born. . . . Leslie will cut his lawyer's teeth on it and it will go on, and there'll be another like it when his son goes into the firm. One can't be revolutionary in the face of that."



(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



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Ruth enjoyed his mood of whimsical resignation. was so exactly right for him.

"I mean," he said, "that is the real solid thing that is going on all the time, and it does somehow prevent the rogues and the dear bourgeois innocents who want the ten per cent. from having things all their own way. That and our folly make us what we are. We can get along without revolutions."

Leslie drank in his hero's words. He could hardly believe the excitement roused in him at the prospect of spending the holidays in the Lakes in Trevor's own house with Trevor's own people and Trevor's own fishing-rods and guns. And the thought of it for Trevor had focussed the strange events of this year in which he had passed through more than was given to most men in a lifetime—nothing great, nothing heroic, but just life tortured in truth, and out of it all he had won two persons, these two, Ruth and Leslie, who would be to him far more than Hardman and Peto had been or could ever have been. Those two would have gone their ways, but these would remain with him. He knew that—always, and he was rich indeed. Decidedly it would be wrong to ask them to the party.

So it was to be a farewell party. He could leave charming, fantastic figures of London grouped round the first Jewish V.C. in the British Navy. At the thought of it he laughed outright. He could promote Cherry into being Mr. Angel's English gentleman, who should show him how to spend his money, and Carline could be left with his dreams of being an English Kerensky, Lenin and Trotzky rolled into one, or, failing that, he could be transferred to the Ministry of Information—his most probable destiny—as an authority on Russian affairs. He could not refrain from laughing.

"What's the joke?" asked Ruth.

"Pink roses," replied he: and she was for a moment alarmed. "I mean," he added, "that it has turned all right. One always knows long before things actu-

happen whether they are going to turn out well or ill. I'll tell you about it some time. But it began with pink roses in the Park, and—and they've all steered their way into the music-hall, which is the appointed end of everything in modern England—music-hall government, music-hall newspapers, music-hall art, music-hall finance. Nothing is left except the Law Courts and the Trade Unions. They will fight it out between them, and you and I and Leslie will run away with the bone."

"But who is ending in the music-hall?" asked Leslie, puzzled and well out of his depth.

"Sophina," said Trevor. He caught Ruth's eye, and they both laughed merrily.

"It's all right, Leslie," said Trevor reassuringly, for Leslie thought they were laughing at him. "It is all as old as the hills. There's nothing new in it. Life repeats itself, and the young people have the best of it in the end, but this time even the old people are going to realize it: because they have gone too far and we are not going to raise a finger to get them out of their mess. The young have always been too sorry for the old, and the old have taken advantage of it . . ."

"That's father!" said Leslie.

"Trenham!" thought Ruth, and looking across at Trevor she wondered if he knew and if she would be spared the pain of telling him. It would be just like him to have understood perfectly, so that there was no need to do anything but let the past slip away with all the remains of the old world that were being swept down at such a dizzy rate on the backward current of time. And she understood him perfectly. He was telling her that the woman of the café had been nothing but a fantastic yet fruitful experience, and that he was in no way personally bound to her.

"We must all go to see Sophina dance," he said.

"Of course," answered Ruth, getting up to go.

"Will she be a success?"

"The greatest possible. Her pearls and her diamonds

will be fabulous, and she will squander more in her lifetime than would restore the whole of Belgium, and she will be applauded for it, and quite rightly."

Trevor and Leslie escorted Ruth back to the Ministry and then slipped behind the Abbey through Dean's Yard to the school. That was a little corner of London untouched by the music-hall spirit. It would remain and its power would be effective long after the din of the scramble for novelty had died away, because the seeds of destiny ripen slowly. They are planted far back in the ages and in mankind—even twentieth-century mankind—must live by its fruits. Leslie was aching to hear what Trevor thought of Ruth, and he trembled with delight when his friend said:

"I shan't let you come to stay without your sister. She's—well . . . There's no one quite like her, is there?"

On the day of the party the evening papers were full of the cross-examination of Mr. Ysnaga, who had given evidence on subpoena in the great African case. In the first place he spoke German; in the second he had traded with Germany before the war; in the third he had acted as agent of a German Metallurgical concern; in the fourth he had been in prison in South Africa, in England, in America; in the fifth— But there is no need to peruse the chapters of Mr. Ysnaga's misadventures. He had always been in prison for business, never for anything that touched his personal and private honour. He stood forth before the world and his own conscience an honest Jew, and he got what he wanted out of Mr. Barnes's subpoenaed advertisement for himself as an impresario, and the arts of leading counsel could not trip him into perjury. He blandly admitted all the charges brought against him, and the part he had played in the complicated history of the African Edmonton Lands Company. Mr. Barnes of Her Majesty's days had shot his bolt. There was no one else whom he could touch. The case was as good as lost: though that meant nothing, as there would be an appeal.

Trevor had listened to the proceedings, and was filled

with admiration of Mr. Ysnaga, who brushed aside all insinuations with "Before the war." That was before the war. He was now a patriot making khaki and supplying Government films, with a share in a munitions factory and a large holding in War Bonds. To attack such patriotism with old and stale accusations seemed nothing short of dastardly, and Mr. Ysnaga slipped down from the witness-box smiling blandly, having Napoleonically turned defeat into triumph.

Trevor thought that his would be something like a party with Mr. Ysnaga and the Jewish V.C. as its lions. No duchess in pre-war days had done better than that.

He had decided to throw open both the flats, and he filled both with artificial pink roses, wonderfully imitated and scented. Mr. Angel sent him two silken Union Jacks from his factory with which to strike the patriotic note, and Cora borrowed some brilliant draperies from the theatre wardrobe. A piano was hired; also gleaming cutlery and napery.

Even though the two flats were thrown open there was hardly room enough, for Cherryman had sniffed both money and success: the beginning perhaps of a new Society, and had informed every one of his enormous acquaintance of the gathering. The guardsmen were there: the poets, the long-haired, bearded men from Bloomsbury, the short-haired girls from the Slade, painters in khaki, commissioned to paint war pictures, young ladies who organized for charities, elegant young men who organized Imperialism for the Round Table, and deliberately shabby young men who did the same for democracy, for the I.L.P., and the Radical Group. Imagistes, American poetasters, derelicts from the Café Royal, all kinds of people credible and incredible: comedians and chorus ladies from the theatre: Cherryman, Carline, adoring Troshky (as he called him) and all agog for the further triumph of Sophina Solomonovna. Mr. Ysnaga and Mr. Angel were there. (They had a long consultation with counsel after the day in Court.) Because they were late and the patriotic note could not be sounded

without them, the ball was set rolling by a young lady from the theatre singing her song from the new revue and after that Sophina was to dance.

She had gathered confidence in the theatre, knew exactly what she could do, and made no attempt to go beyond her capacity. Every one applauded her except Cora, who glared at her, suspecting her of designs upon Trevor. She knew Sophina for what she was, the pushing little Jewess too clever by half for any Christian woman. And Cora suffered, too, because she had no accomplishments. She showed as much of her back as she could, but no one took any notice of it. It needed the limelight. But in spite of these mortifications Cora enjoyed her party. It was the beginning of things undreamed of only a year ago when she was living in Gerrard Street with Estelle, and Estelle too loved the party, with a lot of rich men and clever women, though she strongly disapproved of the artistic and intellectual element introduced by Cherryman. They were neither one thing nor the other—according to Estelle, neither rich nor on the game. She regarded them as nondescript and somehow indecent: rather what she had always suspected Trevor of being.

He, for his part, revelled in the party, though he longed for Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga to come to give it the patristic finishing touch. How Hardman would have loved it! What jokes he would have invented! What lessons he would have pulled, metaphorically and in fact! How he would have delighted in introducing the young man who talked of Chinese poetry and nothing else to Cora! Trevor did that. Dear old Cora, with her Jews and her money and her bare back, she could be happy anywhere! Since she had gone into the theatre she had lost her old restless jealousy, and she seemed to accept that she was losing him and that every day brought her nearer to the end.

"Let me introduce you," said Trevor. "Miss Cora Dinmont—Mr. Twemlow, who knows all about the Chinese aristocracy." And as he moved away he heard Mr. Twemlow saying:

"There has never been anything like it: the perfection of aristocracy in China is the great period . . ."

And at the other end of the room was Sophina dancing with a Jewish gusto which might well pass for Russian barbarism, and just at that moment, timed to perfection, Mr. Angel and Mr. Ysnaga arrived in evening dress accompanied by the first Jewish V.C. in the uniform of a Lieutenant R.N.V.R. The music went on. Sophina danced.

"Ach! Trevor! Dare you are!" said Mr. Angel in his thickest accent. "Here he is! De first Jew to vin de V.C. in de Navy. Tell him vere it vos, poy."

The Jewish V.C., a slight, simple-looking young man, glanced furtively from side to side. He seemed oppressed by the society in which he found himself, and yet, Trevor thought, familiar enough with it.

"It was in a scrap off the Dogger Bank."

"Submarines!" said Mr. Angel, with a juicily rolled "r."

"Yes. Submarines. It was dirty weather, and we'd been on patrol . . ." He muttered so that he was hardly audible, when suddenly there was a shriek:

"Finberg!"

And through the crowded room, almost in one bound, came Sophina.

"Finberg! You dirty sneak!"

With one hand she seized him by the collar and tore it open and wrenched off his black tie, and with the other she pulled his hair and shook his head until it seemed it must surely part from his body. Nobody moved. Nobody attempted to rescue the hero. Only Mr. Angel said falteringly:

"Finberg?"

Trevor turned to Cherryman, and said:

"Is it Finberg?"

"Yes," answered Cherryman. "That's Finberg."

Mr. Ysnaga cried:

"You said your name was Salomon."

But Finberg was not in a condition to deal with the situation.

"He's had two hundred of my money!" said Mr. Angel. Mr. Ysnaga slipped out.

"Yes," said Sophina, "Finberg's his name, a dirty swindling Yid who crawled out of the East End to write poetry. You ask him if he knows Spital Square."

"Oh! shut up, Phina," said Finberg, hanging his head.

"If you ask me," she screamed, "he's a deserter from the Army."

Trevor tried to lead her away.

"That's all right," said Finberg, turning to Mr. Angel. "She used to live with me. Her name's Lipinsky. You probably know her father."

Trevor said to Finberg:

"Better get out!"

And the unlucky hero tried to slip away, but as he reached the door Mr. Ysnaga arrived with two policemen, and Finberg was led away. Mr. Angel was nearly weeping.

"Vy did you do dat, Mr. Ysnaga? I don't want to charge him."

"He's a dirty rotter!" said Sophina, her eyes still blazing.

For the rest the incident had passed, and the Jews were left to themselves.

"He's a dirty rotter," she said. "I knew he'd end like that. If it hadn't been for him I'd never have quarrelled with my father."

"Is it Solomon Lipinsky?" asked Mr. Angel.

Sophina bowed her head.

"He quarrels with a good girl like you? Ach! Kom Kom. Aus min haus heraus, eh? . . . Schade!"

The explosion had had the effect of sorting the guests. The theatricals drifted across to Cora's flat: the intellectuals stayed in Trevor's, and both enjoyed themselves according to their lights, but no one enjoyed the party as much as their host. . . . It was good-bye, good-bye. He knew now which way he was going. . . . Pink roses no more. That enchantment was broken, as also was the desire to work marvels with the magic word "million." The

was for the mob and their masters. For the individuals who emerged there was life which no enchantment could attain, no magic transmogrify. And life was simple. Life for a man was contained in his friend and his love, two things, purity and power, and for a woman—this was the truth he had learned from Ruth's eyes—life was conception, first of her man, then of her child.

Trevor laughed. Ah! how happy he was! He would slip away soon, leaving them all in their music-hall. . . . In his flat silence had been obtained while Mr. Twemlow read a Chinese lyric of six lines. From Cora's flat came the strains of an American war-song. . . . Trevor stood in the passage, away from both groups, and thought of Coniston and a boat, Leslie fishing, Ruth steering, himself rowing. . . . That was the way. To pick up old traditions and make them new. Home, love, a friend. . . . These things led to the unattainable. . . . What friends Ruth and Hardman would have been. . . . Oh, the pity of it! . . . So much to struggle through. . . . So much vain barren folly. What Hardman had meant was the splendid folly which clings to illusions until they become reality. That he had done, that he would always do. . . . The pink roses of illusion had in reality become a little dewy bud. . . . So good-bye, good-bye, pink roses. . . .

While the party was in full swing he stole away, got into a taxi and drove to the house where he had lived with Hardman and Peto. The old rooms were vacant. . . . He took them for the next few months. . . . It was useless, he knew, attempting any kind of explanation with Cora. He sent her a wire saying he had been called away, and told himself he would write to her. He had drifted into her existence. He would drift out again. That was what she must have expected. . . . It was right that it should be so. He had performed the whole duty of man; he had left nothing as he found it. Besides, the new life had begun, and he wanted Leslie to come and see him in Hardman's room, to sit as Hardman used to do on the sofa, throwing out his legs, holding a cushion on his stomach

and eating sweets. . . . And after that the pink rose-bud on the grey dress with the clear grey eyes shining above them, meeting one day the grey eyes as clear that also had loved him, and had looked clean into his soul and had understood and trusted him. . . . As his mother had trusted him, so he trusted Ruth, for he knew. . . . There was no need for him to be told, and he trusted her. . . . "Ruth, Ruth, there is nothing lost, nothing, nothing. They wanted us to live in the old life, but we could not do it because of each other. . . . Love has to begin again every time, at the beginning, in the world as it is and as it will be. . . . Good-bye, pink roses, good-bye . . ." And he thought fantastically of Mr. Ysnaga and Sophina together dancing a Bacchanal, scattering rose-leaves and treading them with their tripping feet. . . . Oh yes. Mr. Ysnaga was a wonderful man, a wonderful man. . . . And presently another young man would come under the spell of pink roses, and Mr. Ysnaga would make another leap forward in wealth and power, and the young man would drift away. . . . That was the way of the world. That was how the world worked. One bought a dog without meaning to buy it and in the end one was in love because—oh! because youth finds a way.

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